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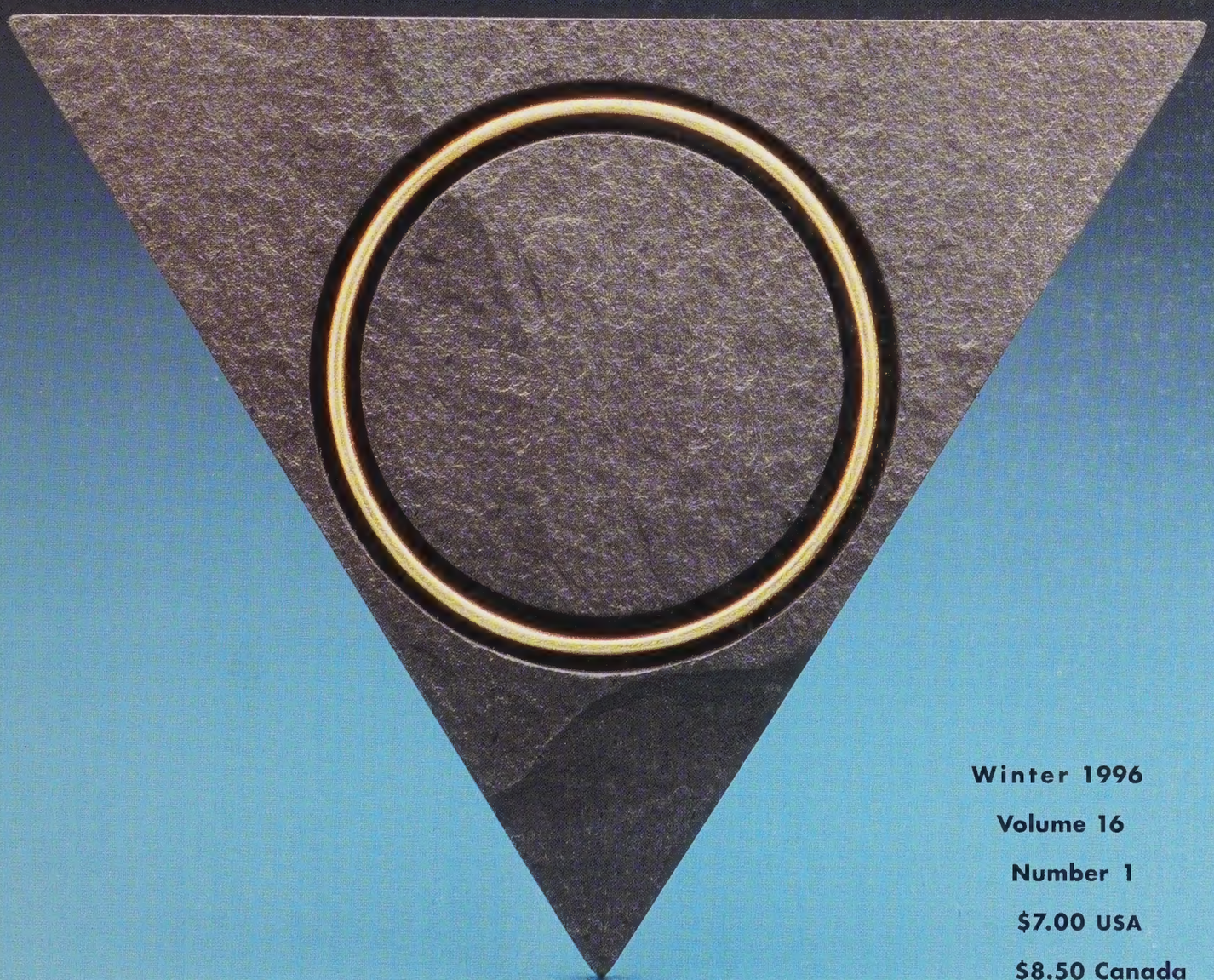

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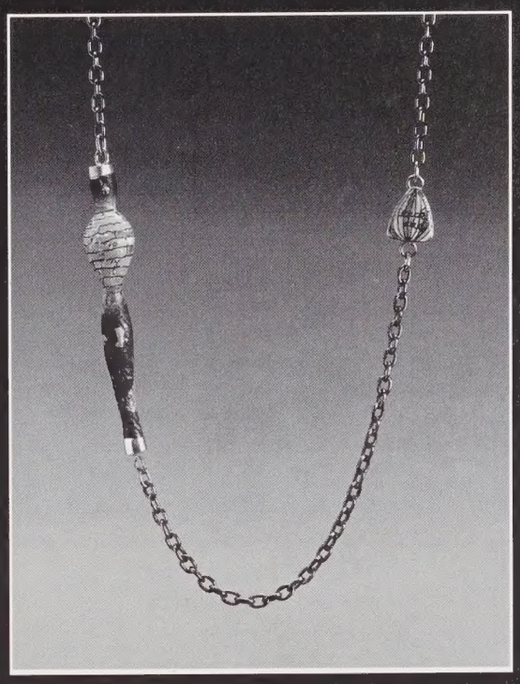

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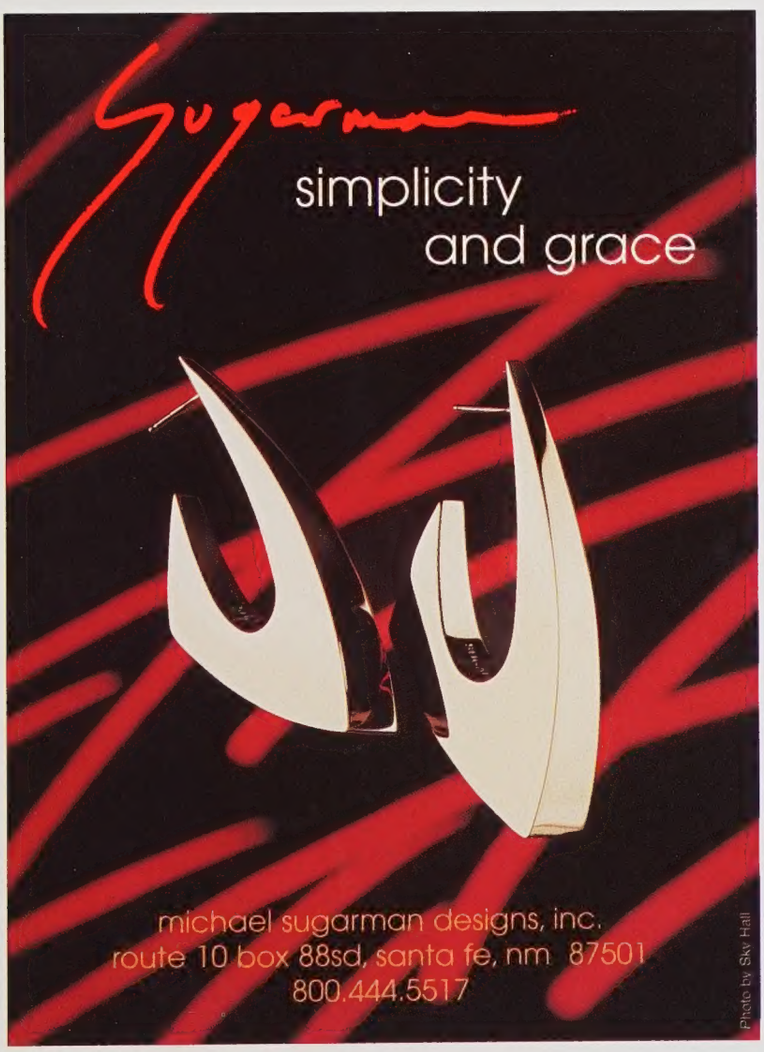

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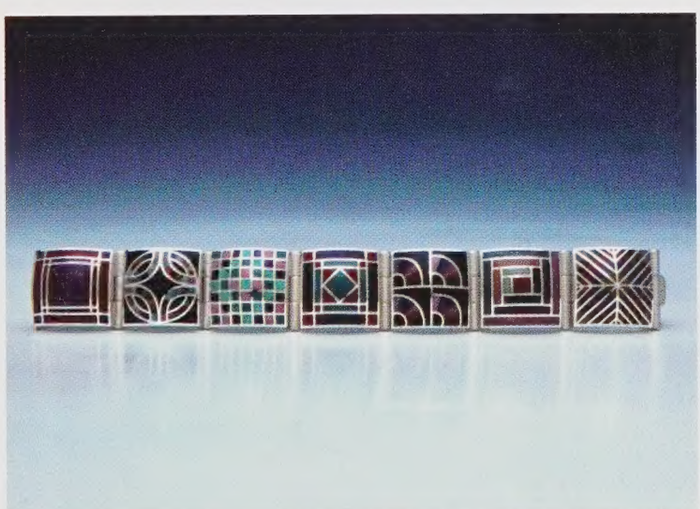

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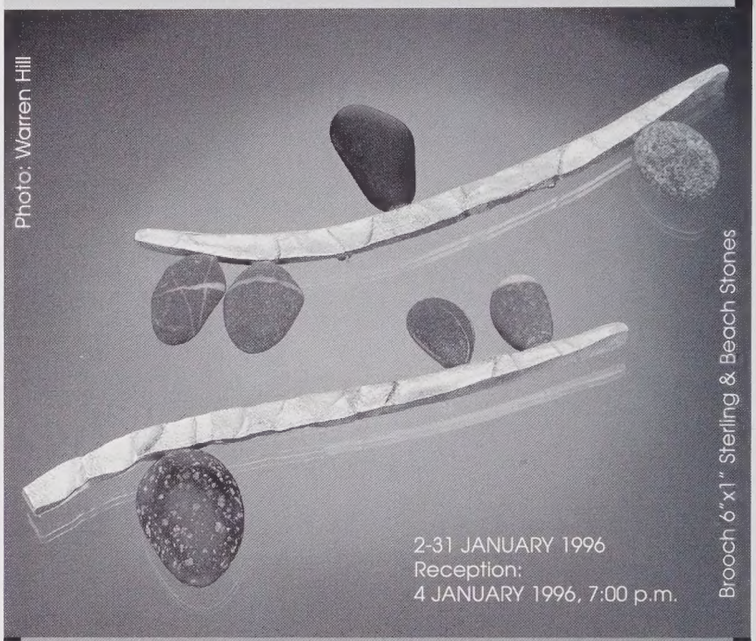

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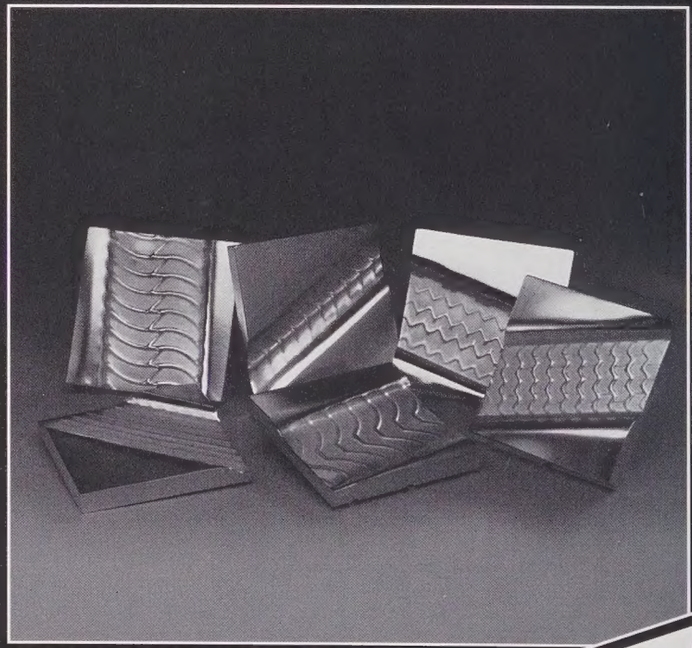

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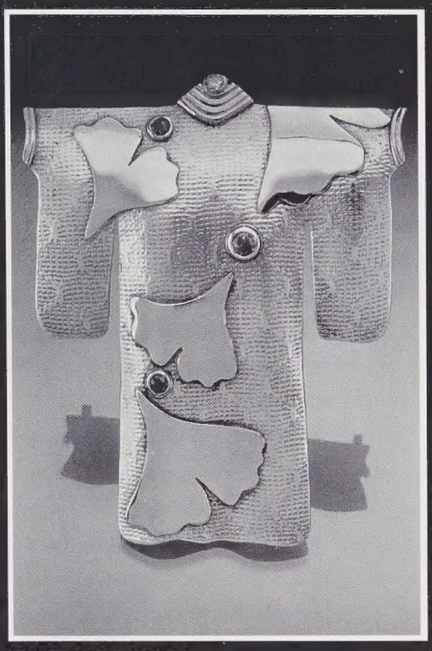

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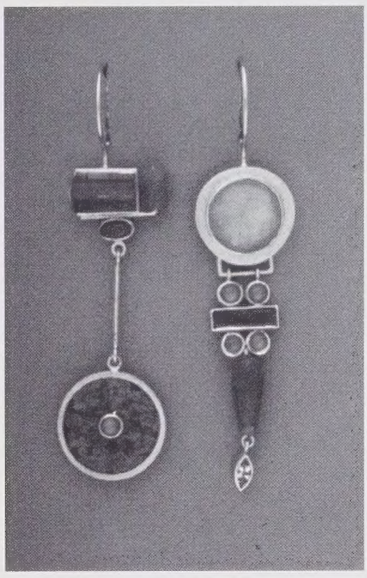

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Editorial

I may well be the only editor of an arts publication in the United States who has not yet gone on record concerning government funding of the arts. My reluctance has had nothing to do with where I stand on the issue. As an unapologetic and unrepentant liberal, I politically and philosophically believe in the efficacy and importance of government support of the arts through publicly financed institutions, grants, cash awards, and in-kind donations of space and human resources. Even the most cynical individuals should realize that such support is a wise investment of a relatively small amount considering its role in inculcating the values of society at large. I am also willing to accept a lack of consistency for the sake of a lively dialogue between various schools of aesthetic thought. I would be more than happy to see my tax dollars spent on both a retrospective of the work of Margaret De Patta and a major exhibition of *street jewelry* from South Central Los Angeles. I neither fear nor resist the aesthetic brouhaha caused by the demands of a democratic society. Instead, my reluctance has come from an inertial sadness induced by the failure of artists and arts educators to effectively educate the public.

I have heard far too many of my colleagues in the arts plead that "the arts are valuable" that "their contribution to spiritual and intellectual life is priceless". And I have heard more than an equal number say that a particular work or group of works must simply be experienced, that its appeal can not be articulated. To put it another way I hear many arguing that even though some people may never understand certain kinds of art the public should pay for it anyway because specialists (read partisans) say that it is good.

I do not want to be misunderstood here. I agree with Louis Armstrong who once said of jazz: "If you have to ask you'll never get it." My point is if someone has to ask and *you expect that someone to foot the bill,* you had better try to help them get it. Even though through apathy and a failure to be politically engaged we may have repudiated our responsibility to govern ourselves that is no excuse to argue that our legislators should repudiate their responsibility in allocating resources by simply and uncritically deferring to *experts in the field.* Whether we like it or not, money, at least, has the illusion of having a fixed and quantifiable value. We cannot reasonably and without a good deal of advocacy through education, expect it to be apportioned on the basis of what we claim is the ineffable value of art.

In the midst of cutting social programs my state legislature recently passed a bill to support the public financing of a private sports facility. Of all the arguments cited by legislators the most frequent was: "I voted for this bill because it would bring money into the state's coffers." In the face of an enormous amount of public resentment directed toward professional baseball the legislators had found a way to clearly quantify the expenditure of funds. As onerous as it may be to artists and academics, who prefer to operate on a *higher plane of being,* proponents for public funding for the arts should learn a few lessons.

I am also not suggesting that we make a purely financial argument for funding in the arts. Instead, we need to interogate our art making, clarify what value this activity brings to our lives and then find ways to articulate, in a clear and understandable way, how those activities can bring value to others.

It is the responsibility of arts professionals, even serious art amateurs, to educate the public, not to simply make pronouncements that somehow art is good for that public. If nothing else, arts supporters should convey enough enthusiasm and comittment in their sincere and intelligent attempts to explain art that such attempts are able to convince others that it is probably a significant phenomena, not simply a selfish indulgence. If we continue to hide behind a veil of mysteries and aesthetic elitism we well deserve to be marginalized and deemed irrelevant to society's needs, interests, and financial largesse.

Those who argue that the experience of art loses something when that art is analyzed, critiqued, and put into a social and political context, will continue to contribute to the dialogue *within* the field but they need to recognize the limitations of that argument outside of a relatively small group of initiates and congnescenti. They also better be willing to reach deep into their personal, and I assume equally spiritual, wallets and purses.

— FCL

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House Cat, 1990
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Recent Sightings

Bruce Metcalf

The Wearability Issue

One of the major perplexing points expressed about contemporary *art* jewelry is the question of wearability – or, more properly, un-wearability. Why do so many art jewelers seem to make jewelry that is too large, heavy, pointy, or too fragile to be worn conveniently? The question generates considerable heat. In the Fall 1995 Society of Jewelry Historians U.S.A. Newsletter, Ettagale Blauer reiterates the question in her review of Susan Grant Lewin's book, *One of a Kind, American Art Jewelry Today*: "I remain mystified by the belief that something can be called jewelry yet need not be wearable.... Why not call it sculpture if it can't be worn?" Implicit in Blauer's question, is the proposition that unwearable jewelry is not jewelry at all. It's sculpture.

First, one has to ask: Is wearability the essence of jewelry? Non-Western cultures have produced thousands of examples of large, clunky, and heavy personal adornment that, from a Western point of view, would be considered unwearable. In Africa, Surma women of southwest Ethiopia wear large wood or clay lip plates; Fulani women in Mali wear *kwottenai kanye,* finned earrings six or seven inches across; Sambaru and Rendille women often wear so many beaded necklaces they cannot tilt their heads down. I could continue for hours citing similar examples from Asia, India, Oceania, and the Americas. Is it possible that not one of these many types of adornment is really jewelry? I don't think so. It would be outrageously arrogant to declare that Western standards of wearabilty must determine, for the entire world, what jewelry is and is not. For any student of world jewelry, sheer size and weight cannot preclude an object from being jewelry, and Blauer's implicit exclusion is wrong.

One can object that all the examples I chose are non-Western, and each culture is entitled to write its own rules. Exactly. Blauer is offering us a definition of jewelry that is essentially conservative, white, and middle class. She represents a cultural bias, which holds that jewelry should not interfere with the smooth and orderly functioning of both the physical and the social body. Jewelry should not be so heavy as to become irritating or painful; coats and gloves should pass conveniently over pins and rings. One shouldn't have to pay attention to the object they are wearing. Jewelry should make you more attractive, but it shouldn't be overtly critical or confrontational.

It does not take much analysis to realize that these rules are about as bourgeois as they can be. Beyond the pale of the middle-aged, white middle class, the rules change. On the streets of Philadelphia, African-American women routinely wear gold earrings three and four inches in diameter. Kids everywhere are getting their ears, noses, lips, tongues, nipples, and genitals pierced and their bodies tattooed. And art jewelers are making big jewelry.

For the past century, jewelry has tracked developments in the other visual arts closely. Arts and Crafts jewelry partook of the doctrines of truth-to-materials and honest labor that Pugin and Ruskin espoused; Art Nouveau jewelry presented the same whiplash line and femme fatales that appeared in Symbolist painting. Cubism; International style reductivism; Surrealism; Abstract Expressionism; each had their counterpart in jewelry. It should come as no surprise, then, that the values and methodologies of contemporary art should be applied to contemporary jewelry. And, as we well know, one of the primary values in recent art is to expand the envelope, to explore how far a given format might be stretched. Just as we had big paintings and big sculpture – really, nothing new in the broad picture – so we have big jewelry.

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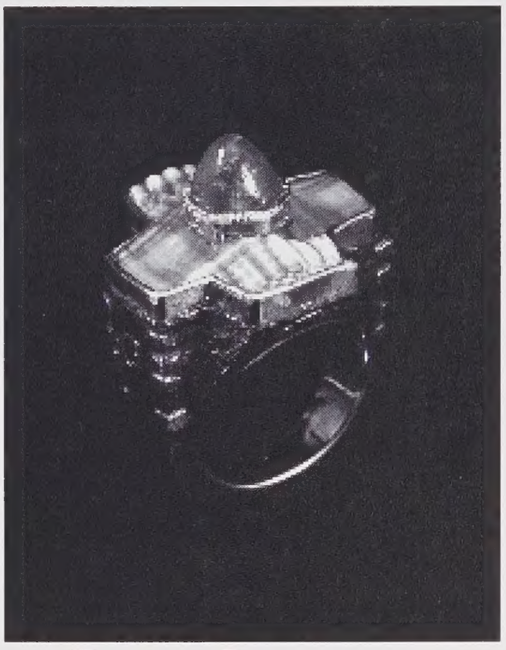

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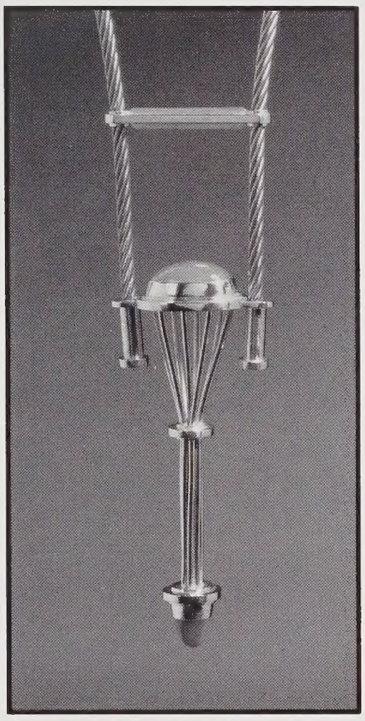

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Along the Way

William Baran-Mickle

For someone who began making jewelry in high school and who usually makes work no larger than two feet, working on an scale of six feet is quite an education. My first such work, *Along The Way*, is a 6 x 6 foot wall relief, and it was the winning entry in the Art-In-Architecture national competition. This competition was the idea of textile artist Ellen Kochansky of South Carolina.

Seeing an open space nearby her newly installed work Kochansky envisioned that space as an educational testing ground where a craft-based artist could try working on an architectural scale. The competition allowed artists to design large scale work (in my case nearly 10 times larger), plan how such a work could be made, and go through the rigors of presentations. [See: *Craft Report,* February. 1994. "Her Mission: Commissions", by Marilyn Stevens.]

Along the Way, (wall relief), 1995
copper, silver, wood
72 x 76 x 5"

The competition was designed to emulate the processes artists go through for public sculpture projects. Organizers sought craft-based artists to create works for the public domain. A small budget was also set: $5000 for the winning entry, and a $1500 honorarium for 3 other finalists. Kochansky approached and convinced the American Craft Council and the Hines Interests Limited Partnership (owners of the Chemed Center in Cincinnati, the site for the proposed work and proven friends of the arts) to co-sponsor the competition.

Over 140 artists entered the competition that would take two years to conclude. The jury pared the entries to 20 semi-finalists. This group was asked to submit drawings, maquettes, and a statement outlining the theme of the work and demonstrating how the material and size would fit the building and lobby location. The jury consisted of Michael Monroe, Curator-in-Charge of the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, Toni Sikes, Publisher of the *Guild*, and Ellen Kochansky.

From the 20 semi-finalists the jury selected 4 finalists, who consisted of 3 textile artists and one metalsmith, myself. The final jury consisted of the building's tenants, voting by ballot after four consecutive three month exhibitions of each of the finalists' reliefs.

I was asked several times along the way if I wanted to go through with my proposal as the material and labor costs in what I proposed looked like a loosing proposition for me. While it was true I did not know how many hours I would eventually put in (550), the sheer amount of materials, or the logistics of maneuvering a 36 square foot framework, I did have confidence in the subject matter I had chosen and in my abilities. Additionally, I felt there was no way I would have the opportunity to try a project of this scale on my own, with out a big push. Even if it had the potential to be an economic loss, it would also be an immense educational experience and I would at least have a large work as the beginning of a new direction.

Continued on page 14

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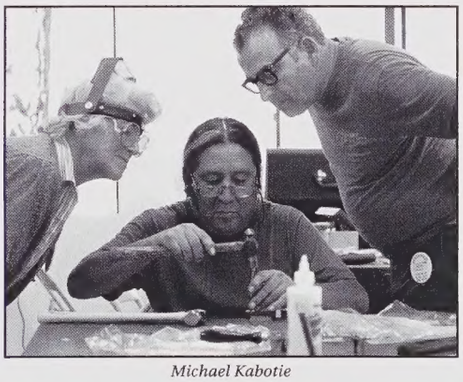

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Continued from page 10

The relief was planned to appear simple on the surface and become more complex with extended viewing. Consisting of two sections, a central image of a landscape with billowing clouds spreads across and out from the top of a frame-like section. Each of the three visible 1 x 6" sections of the frame are made up of objects and images relating to themes of work, home, and vacation and weekend activities. These sections attempt to express the feeling of hectic, conflicting needs and activities competing for attention. The center section is more of a traditional *picture*, a generalized, sweeping landscape of hills and sky giving way to large fluffy clouds. Representing the idea of relief from daily work and family life – a theoretical vacation or retirement location – the image could also symbolize a place of calm within, a sanctuary that makes living a busy life more tolerable and healthy. It could also be seen as an image of the peacefulness of life hereafter.

William Baran-Mickle in his Studio

I rendered many of the elements, quite literally, in three dimensions in what could be described as stage settings. Objects, secured to the metal background, jut out and break the plane of the wall mounted piece. At a total of 18 square feet, the frame required some 75 separate elements and groupings. For someone trained as a silversmith it was tremendously freeing to learn to make faux-vessels (even a partial computer console, an iron, and a take-out coffee cup). Paper patterns were researched, drawn, transferred and fabricated into metal. These were then trimmed and re-adjusted with little room for error. For the most part, I used only 22 gauge sheet which required multiple soldering and which was later to be fitted with bolts to secure the forms to the wooden underbase. Only a few elements, such as a brass alarm clock and a wine cup, were pre-made.

As intricate as the fabrication of 75-plus elements was, the landscape's 20 separate pieces were even more difficult to handle. The longer sections of cloud and sky were up to 4 feet long, quite a challenge in a traditionally outfitted metalsmith's studio. Forming and texturing was complex due to the necessity that all the edges meet without gaps and without being soldered. All of the sections were fitted with bolts and keyed into one another. Given that a 6 x 6 foot relief is largely constructed lying flat, I also needed to frequently climb a 10 foot ladder in order to view the work at its *normal* distance. This enabled me to make critical decisions concerning forms, textures, and the placement of elements. This need for constant adjustment also meant that adding the fittings to the pieces had to wait until all the forms were complete. The total weight of the metal used to cover the 36 square foot area ended up at 50 pounds. The wooden underbase added an additional 80 pounds to the piece.

All of these factors created the need for factory-like, more process oriented work habits than I have used before. Fabrication, placements, fittings, clean-up, oxidation/patination, sealing all surfaces, and final assembly, normally straightforwardly accomplished on a small scale necessitated a change in methods.

Was it all worth it? Absolutely. Even ignoring the fact that I sold a large and ambitious piece, I learned new ways to approach my work. For instance, it had often seemed impossible for me to figure out where I could use assistance. Directing someone else to complete edges, make shapes, or fit elements together had never really been a question of finding competent help, rather it had to do with handing over some relative quantity of authorship. Considering that the frame cladding reached beyond 30 feet (with 4 precisely angled and measured sides), and anticipating trimming and finishing the edges of 75 plus elements, I could finally begin to see where help could be applied without threatening my authorship and bruising my maker's ego.

As it turned out, the cost of materials came to about $750, so I was actually was paid for my time (but not much considering shipping, overhead, etc.). I have a renewed appreciation for the realities of invoices and the values found in craftsmanship. I was also paid, in a sense, by the big push into new directions which the project engendered.

I advise everyone similarly inclined to undertake a shift in scale. My educated intuition tells me there is a *field* out there to be explored and expanded. Techniques are important, master them and get to the point where they are subservient to your creative expression, then we can all see that ideas have the most value.

William Baran-Mickle is a metalsmith and a frequent contributor to Metalsmith *magazine. He lives in Rochester, NY.*

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Marcia Bruno

Exploring the Fluidity of Tension

Marcia Bruno has had to work long and hard to reach the level of simplicity for which she is becoming known in her plastic jewelry. After all, she has only a few minor considerations: line, form, shape, color, and balance. She does not make use of the time-honored fallback position that is open to all artists, which is distraction by excess. It is so easy, when working with an additive medium such as metal or plastic, to just keep on joining elements and hanging things off of other things and marrying metals until the viewer or the hapless wearer is hoping – no, begging – for all those married metals and other materials to get a divorce, or at least an amicable separation and divide their assets into two separate households so that we can all get back to the basic business of line, form, shape, color, and balance. Bruno's work is pared down almost to its essence, to the point where if you removed any extraneous element the work would quite literally fall apart, as you would have to be removing screws, nuts and bolts, and pin findings. Her work is the artistic equivalent of the No Frills Flight.

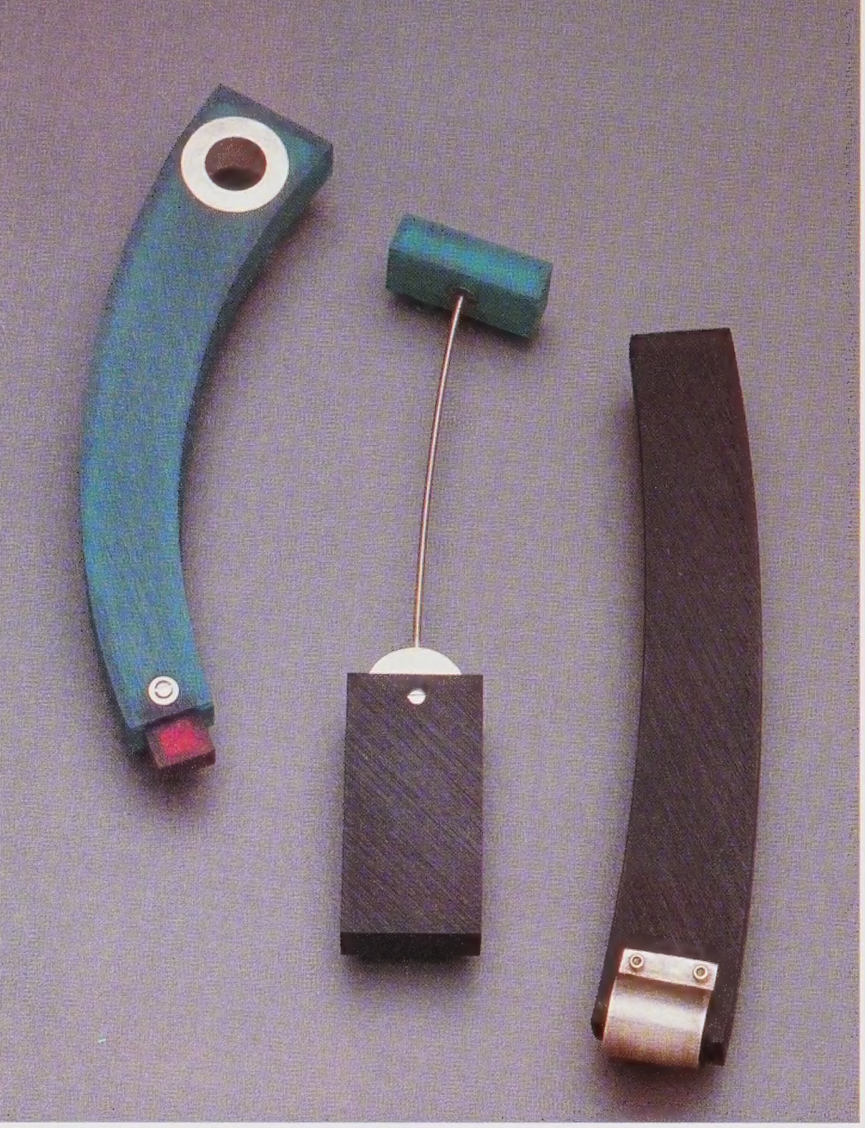
Text by Dana Standish

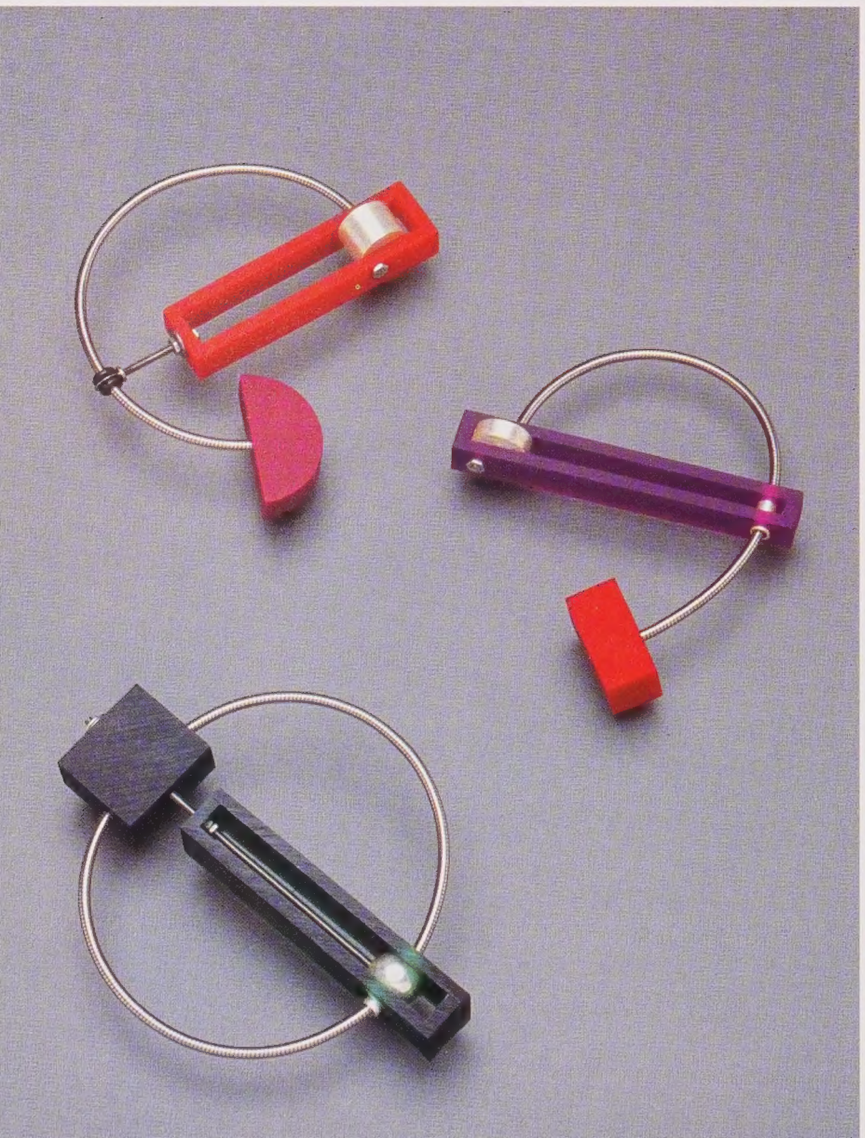
Marcia Bruno is as straightforward and unpretentious as her work, and like her work she has had to go through a process of paring down to get that way. She made her choice of career in typical undergraduate fashion – she knew she wanted to be an artist, but the sculpture class was full so she signed up for jewelry. From such a humble and unpromising beginning came a great passion for and dedication to the processes of jewelry-making. Bruno ended up graduating from the metals program at the Tyler School of Art in 1988. Stumbling into metals at Tyler had been an unexpected whim of fate, one of the gifts that the Muse doles out so grudgingly. At Tyler she found support for her love of industrial processes and materials. "At Tyler they showed us every jewelry process known to man", says Bruno. "There was a section on machine tool processes, electrofoming, coloring of metals. Everything but enameling." Bruno dove into the technology; some of her undergraduate work looks as if she were trying to do all the new processes on the same piece. She was fascinated with new materials and with color. She started to experiment with anodizing aluminum and then began to combine bits of plastic with the aluminum, until finally a graduate student showed her how to laminate plastics. From then on she and metals parted ways. "I just went nuts for the technique", says Bruno, "I started using a little more plastic, a little less aluminum, until I found that for me the aluminum techniques held less interest than the possibilities of plastics."

Brooches, 1995
acrylic, silver, steel, 8" long

When Bruno graduated from Tyler and decided to look for a graduate program, she had to choose between San Diego, "where the weather was perfect", and Seattle, "where it poured rain the whole time I was there". She chose Seattle because she felt that with all the rain it was probably a place where she could get some work done.

Photographs by Douglas Yaple





CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT

Brooches with Vents, 1995
acyrlic, silver, steel
7" long

Neckpiece, 1995
acrylic, silver, steel
13 x 9 x 7½"

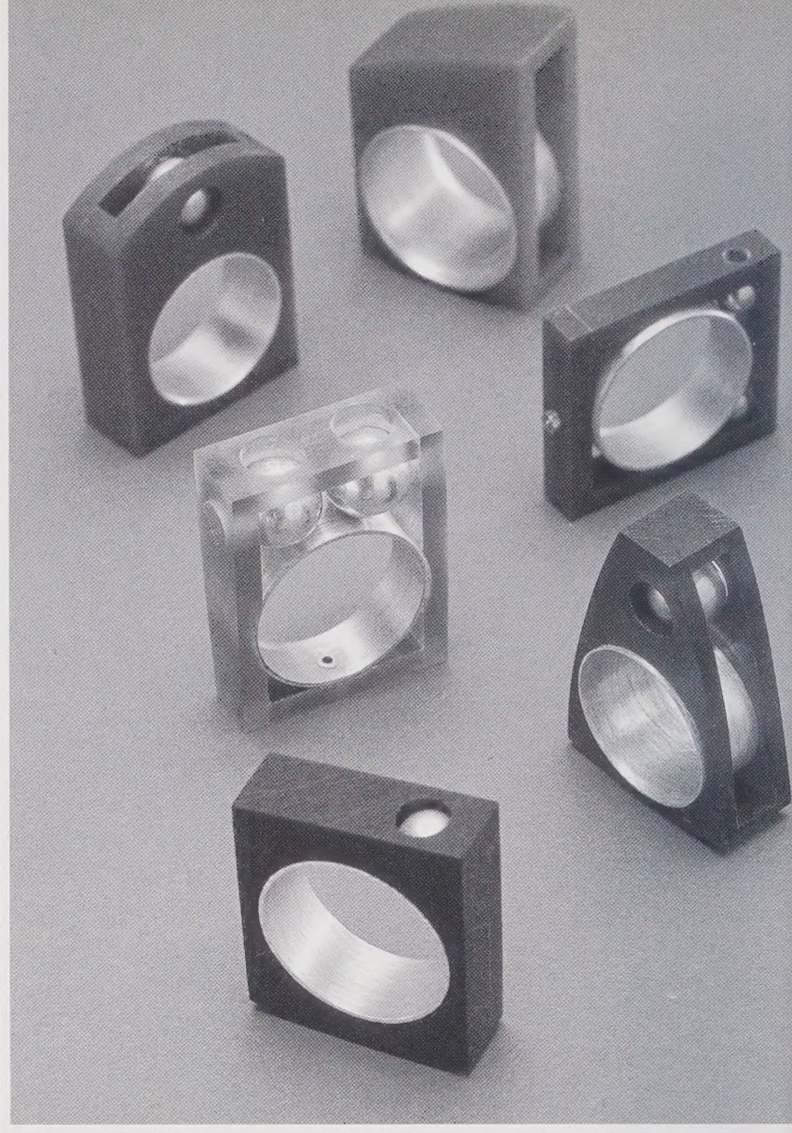
Galvanometer Series, (detail), 1995

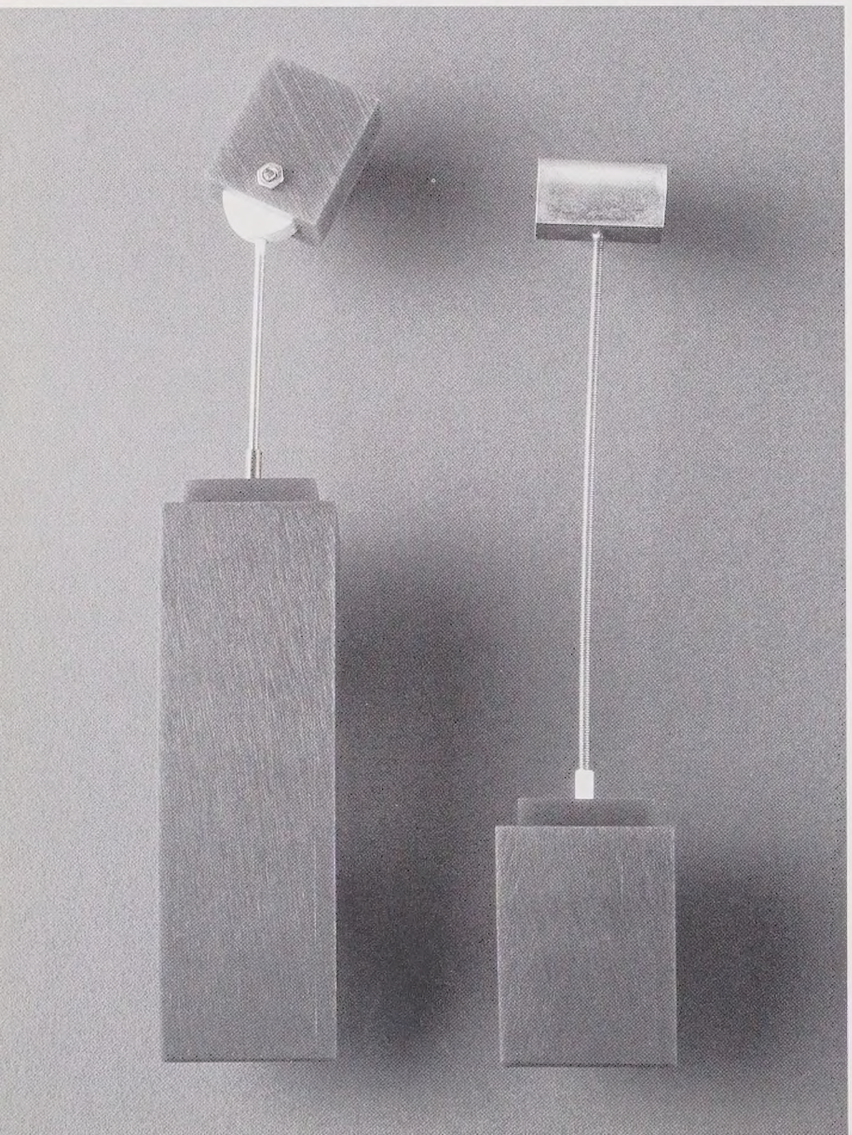
Galvanometer Series, 1995
acrylic, silver, steel
approx 4" dia. each

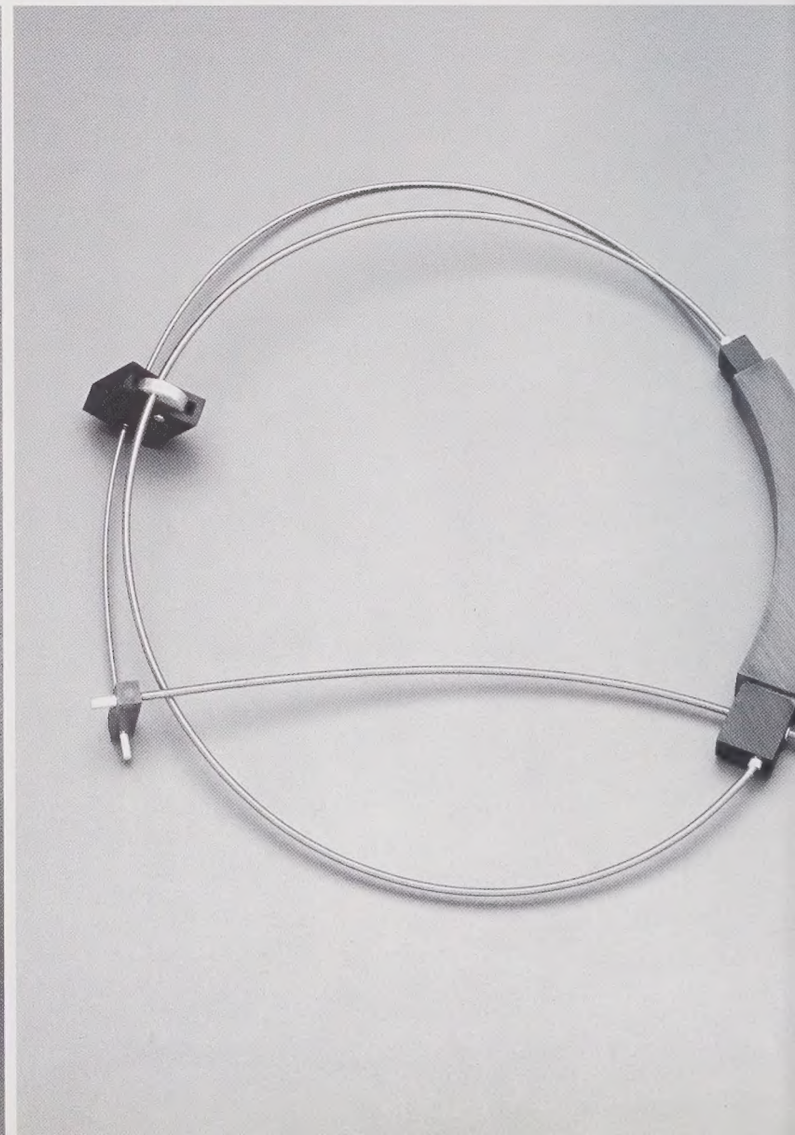
It proved a fortuitous choice, particularly since Bruno was given a job as a shop technician in the Industrial Design department. At the University of Washington, though the metals instructors Mary Lee Hu and John Marshall, are metalsmiths in a very pure sense of the term, Bruno felt supported in her explorations of nontraditional materials. "I'm sure that John and Mary took one look at my plastic work and thought, 'Oh my God, what are we going to do with her?'", Bruno says. Still, it was at the urging of her graduate committee, which included Hu, Marshall, and faculty from the Industrial Design department, that Bruno began to try to pare her designs down to their essential elements. "They encouraged me to take one section of the piece and focus on it. It has taken me all this time to get all the extra elements out, to pull back enough to be able to use elements that are a blown-up version of what used to be many individual connections."

Bruno was always interested in building. As a child, she helped her father with carpentry projects. Even when she was young, her father treated her as though she were a capable builder, and she grew up assuming she could make whatever she put her mind to. What she mostly thinks about are shapes and colors. "The process of making objects gives me ideas", she says. She is fascinated by connections. She gets inspiration from architecture, furniture, and an outdated physics textbook of her husband's, which has bookmarks in every page to mark its fabulous ideas, and which she handles so reverently that you would think it had been printed by Gutenberg himself. She loves expansion bridges because they embrace the laws of balance and tension that she strives for in her work. "When I see a shape, I think jewelry. When I am on the bus and I see vents on the tops of buildings, I just know I have to make something with vents", she says.

Bruno's new works are pared way down from the cacophony of some of her earlier student work. She has constructed hollow shapes from acrylic plastic and connected the shapes using guitar strings, which suspend the elements in a stable yet fluid relationship to each other. In other words, the guitar strings allow the pieces to move, but only as far as Bruno wants them to. There is tension between the mobility of the elements and the control that Bruno exercises in her placement of those elements. The pieces are kinetic, yet they are held in place by the literal tension of the strings, as well as by the visual tension Bruno has created with her choice of color and shape.







CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT

Synthetic Composite Series, (bracelet), 1995
acrylic, silver, steel

Rings, 1995
acrylic, silver, steel

Neckpiece, 1995
acrylic, silver, steel
12" dia.

Brooches, 1995
acrylic, silver, steel, surrel
8" long

Her pins in the *Galvanometer* series are a study in asymmetrical balance. The galvanometer is an instrument (from her sacred physics text) used to measure the strength and direction of electrical current, and these pieces are imbued with a directional energy that comes from the suspension of their elements at the ends of the bound wire of their guitar string tethers. Each piece has a focus – a sterling silver element trapped in an acrylic box, the sterling sending back the light, the plastic taking the light and keeping it. The acrylic elements look as though they could fling apart at any minute from the force of their attaching guitar strings. Yet, there is a quirky kind of balance that guarantees restraint.

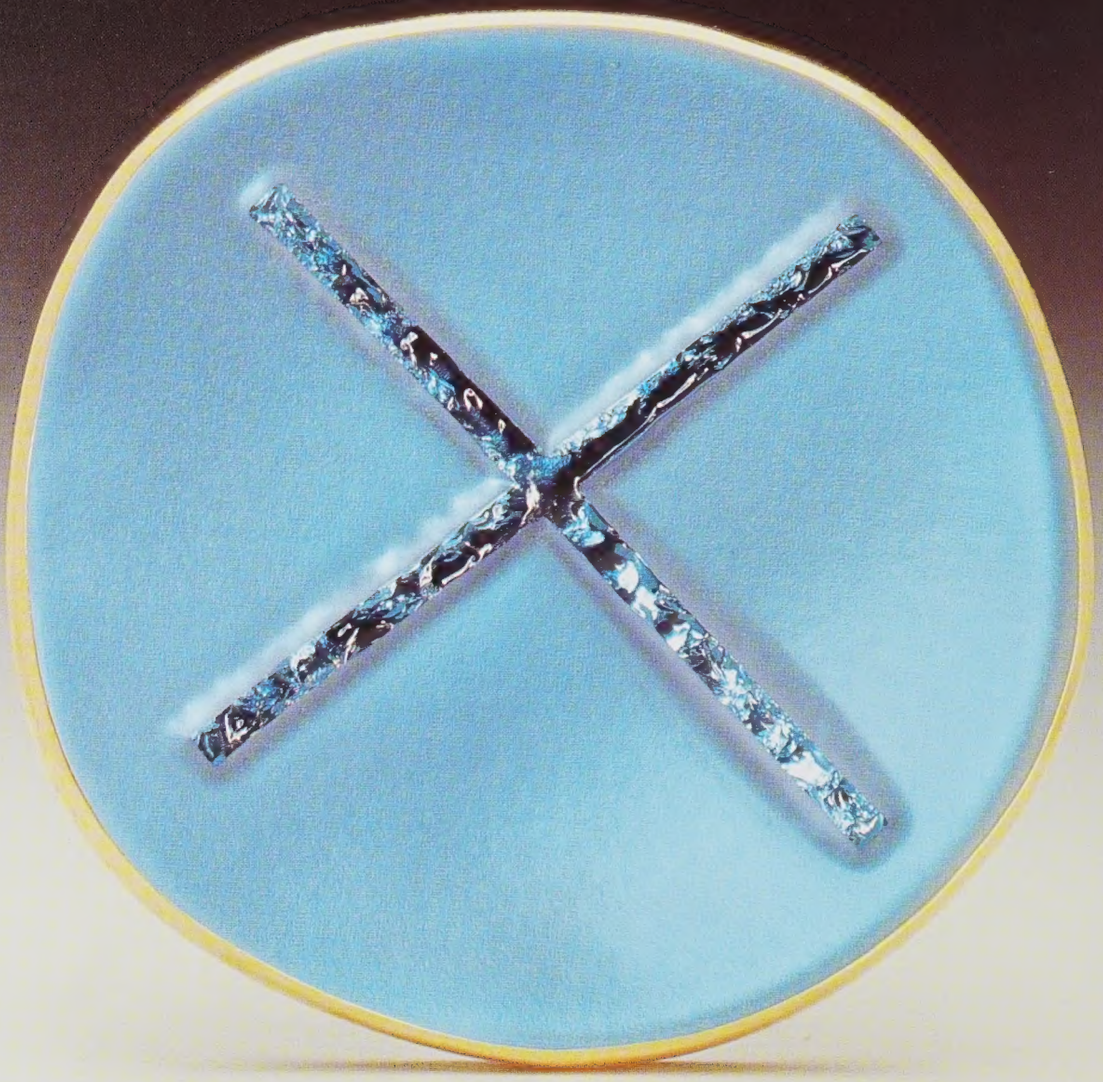
Bruno's *Untitled Neckpiece* is a large piece that she distilled from a more complicated idea. It is made of six hollow acrylic pieces connected by a simple arrangement of sterling ball bearings and steel guitar strings. Bruno sets up a rhythm of color and shape that is more peaceful and fluid than the *Galvanometers*. This piece meanders around in a circle, its soft red, blue, and black shapes suspended in graceful, rhythmic counterpoint; it looks unlikely to spring apart in a burst of pent-up tension. This work is like the sequence in the movie *Fantasia,* where the conductor is introducing Mickey Mouse to the various instruments in the orchestra. Each instrument makes its sound and the sound appears on the screen as a shape and a color. Several instruments together make several distinct shapes and colors, and the whole orchestra makes a rhythm of shapes and colors. Bruno's medium is plastic, not music, yet she achieves the same sort of harmonious visual translation of tension and balance through color and shape.

This piece is perhaps the simplest of Bruno's works, and it is also one of the most recent. Is she still in the process of paring down her vision? "No", she says somewhat mournfully, "I'm going back up again. But not to where I was in undergraduate school. These pieces now are mostly design problems for me. I try to make myself a problem and make it work visually. I try to make pieces that are clear and minimal, but it's hard for me to keep from adding things. I've had to learn how to take things out when there's too much going on."

"I don't know if my work has any *meaning*," she says, "but I like it when the shapes and images remind people of something from their own lives. I try not to be too literal. I want my works to make people draw their own conclusions. I would like to use shape and tension and color to make people think of things from their own lives, sort of like in a Fellini movie."

These are the connections that Marcia Bruno focuses on: the relationship between color and balance, between tension and fluidity, between stability and motion; and the relationship between art and people's lives. As a matter of fact, sort of like in a Fellini movie.

Dana Standish is a metalsmith and writer. She lives and works in Seattle, WA.



The Visual Articulations of Donald Friedlich

TEXT BY CLAIRE DINSMORE

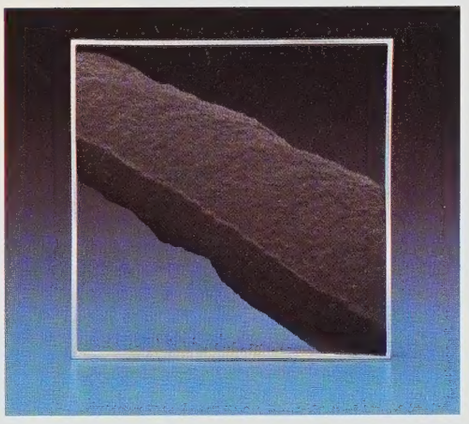
Traveling down Stony Acre Drive in Cranston, Rhode Island, one cannot help but wonder at the use of this particular name for a road which repeatedly assails one with the monotonous banality of just another street in suburban America. Yet, on discovering the home of Donald Friedlich situated behind a silvered wood fence and ancient pines one encounters a farmhouse nearly 330 years old, with one end made entirely of stone. This anomalous dwelling suddenly makes this street's name seem extremely apropos, if only as a gesture towards the poetry which this house lends so greatly to the landscape.

As one enters this home one can immediately see Friedlich's aesthetic at work. The rooms are warm and inviting with subdued earth tones, edges and corners softened by time's passage and daily use, and asymmetrical angles that have been assumed as the house has settled into the earth over the centuries. Friedlich and his wife, Judith Mitchell have decorated these rooms rather sparsely with artifacts of various cultures and times, these are chiefly objects of use, such as vessels and tools. The somewhat spare decoration is not one of the dearth often evinced by emptiness, instead it is one in which each object – each bowl, spoon, rust encrusted key or handmade spade – has been placed with a care and concern which allows each piece a space and significance unto itself. Friedlich has succeeded in treating his home with the same deep consideration that he brings to the pieces which he creates for the human body.

Friedlich's aesthetic is an austere one. The marks, gestures, and various modalities of level and texture which he creates within a piece are often few and slight. His touch and its verities often appear subtle, seeming to grace the form he has chosen with all that it asks for, no more, no less. There is a note of restraint in his work which tells of the immense discipline he must apply to the creation of each piece, that tells of a consciousness ripe with a finely honed sense of balance. Each mark is considered, contemplated, and chosen for the specificity of its concision, the depth of its impress. The effect he achieves is one akin to the effect often experienced within nature - a quiet awe in the presence of an undeniable force, an effect indicative of Friedlich's paradigmatic understanding of *timelessness.*

Much of Donald Friedlich's life tells the tale of a self-described wanderer. His initial hero was Thomas Edison and as a boy he dreamed of being an inventor. In school he had an outstanding facility in both math and science. At eighteen he tried his lot at college, but after a brief stint there found that he was not at all inclined towards school and soon left, no closer to an image of his future than when he arrived.[1]

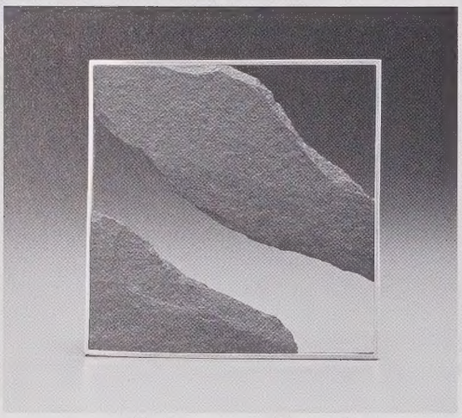
An avid skier from the age of five, Friedlich then moved to Vermont and became a "ski bum", as he jocularly refers to his past self. There he continued to soul search and to try to "...decide what to do with my life". He related a rather telling "mystical tale" from that time: while he was living in a tent in the woods with a group of friends in Stowe, Vermont, He asked a friend who was extremely interested in the I Ching: "What does my future hold?". The reading came up as "power in the creative as yet unrealized". Friedlich staunchly attests to the fact that he doesn't believe in such "hocus pocus", but that, nonetheless, it did "prove to be quite accurate".[2]



LEFT
Translucence Series Brooch, 1994
glass, 22k, niobium, 2 x 1⅞ x ⅜"

ABOVE
Interference Series Brooch, 1994
slate, sterling, 2¼ x 2¼ x ⅜"

Photographs by James Beards



Interference Series Brooch, 1994
slate, 18k, 2 x 2 x 3/8"

The "realization" came via a stone which he had found on the beach in Lambert's Cove, Martha's Vineyard in the summer of 1975, yet he did not know the significance of that stone for quite some time. Later that year he asked a jeweler friend to create a setting for the favored stone. She agreed to help, but insisted that he set the stone himself. He assented, and this encounter proved to be the beginning of the end of Friedlich's travels along the circuitous path that had thus far steered him through life.

He enrolled at the University of Vermont and began to take art and design classes, including every course which emphasized jewelry. With the help of jewelry instructor Laurie Peters, these classes began to stimulate and focus his interest in the medium, to build his confidence and proficiency, and helped to shape his vision. But he soon exhausted the rather scant offerings of the relatively small art department. A particularly meaningful class with Arline Fisch at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, along with the desire to further his studies, led Friedlich to the Rhode Island School of Design, where his most influential instructors were Jack Prip and Claus Bury. In 1982, after three years of study at RISD, he completed what he refers to as his nine year undergraduate career and received his B.F.A.

In his essay "Man and Creative Transformation" Erich Neumann refers to such a pivotal event in a person's life as an "irruption of the personality".[3] When viewing Friedlich's work dating back to his first pieces created at the University of Vermont one can see evidence of all the facilities and intrigues of his life. The technical aspects of jewelry, which come with extreme slowness and difficulty to many a metalsmith, came easily to him – one can envisage the manual dexterity and intense concentration of the would-be inventor watching a new creation unfold before him. In the often clean, hard edge of his pieces one can see the hand and the mind of the artist who was an exceptional student in both math and science. The varied shapes and the pronounced textures which he generates through carving and sandblasting are indicative of his intense attraction to nature.

In most scholarship pertaining to contemporary art criticism the use of the words *beauty* and *quality* have become taboo as it is assumed that they connote a level of connoisseurship which is not accessible to the average person and, thus these terms are considered elitist. The fact that they spring immediately to this critic's mind upon viewing Friedlich's work would be considered by many a value judgment, yet I have heard these same words emerge from many an unschooled lip in reference to his work. The understanding and acceptance of such work is quite rare as Friedlich's language is not a common one in jewelry, but then again, Friedlich is not common. He has taken an aesthetic code, one often exemplified within nature, and brought it into a realm where it has not generally been thought applicable.

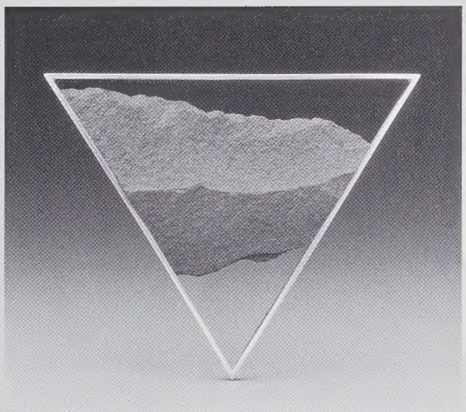
When queried as to what it is that particularly compels him about nature one finds that Friedlich's reaction cannot be concisely, verbally articulated. It is clear that Friedlich's work takes as its reference point an emotional, personal reaction; it has to do with a *feeling* which one experiences in the presence of any significant creation. But when this feeling is experienced in nature it is often connected with and furthered by the mystery inherent in that encounter. Friedlich utilizes the feelings which he experiences and translates them into his own visual articulation, processed through the various machinations of his distinct creative spirit.[4]

In the artist's own terms: "These pieces are studies in contrast. They are rough and smooth, geometric and organic, precious and non precious, positive and negative. The forms are monumental but the scale is intimate and appropriate for the human body." Upon inspection of the world around us one can see such "studies" abounding everywhere within nature. For example, in 1985 Friedlich was profoundly moved and inspired by a trip which he took to Arizona. He found himself enthralled with some of nature's most breath-taking vistas and monumental creations. In particular, he was intrigued by the effects of time and the forces of the elements which had enriched and articulated each natural form's particular material structure and composition. Two different series of work emerged from his travels in the Southwest: the *Interference Series* and the *Erosion Series.* Within these pieces he interprets the effects which the elements have upon nature's creations by cutting, sandblasting and carving the surfaces of his chosen material, generally slate or other stones.[5]

In the *Interference Series,* geometric expanses of stone are divided or pierced by disparate elements of gold or carved troughs, much the way a seemingly invulnerable plain may be carved by a small stream. The brooches of the *Erosion Series,* most closely linked with the Arizona trip, have been carved into with a sandblaster, altering or softening their surfaces in order to emulate nature's process of erosion.

The artist's most recent work belongs to a series which he calls *Translucence.* They are made of sheets of glass which he cuts with a lens cutter. He continues to accentuate the "funky" edges of these forms by further carving and sanding them. After the initial cutting he treats the surface via his usual techniques of masking and sandblasting, sometimes adding another element of altered color to the design by backing the piece in metal.

The first thing one notes in this series is a striking difference from the work of the past in his treatment of the outside edges – the clean or jagged line is gone – these pieces are, more or less, round. Although he has been using glass for some time, chiefly in his *Patterns Series* (for which in 1988 and 1991 he was included in the New Glass Review of the Corning Museum of Glass) in choosing to utilize the form of the circle he has created quite a different ambiance within these pieces, one which is more receptive to the contours of the human body instead of opposed to them. In Friedlich's past work one notes the often severe contrast to the body – when a piece is worn it appears to be overlaid upon the body and separate from it. His recent pieces are more in tune with the human body, as if he has chosen another part of nature to incorporate into his work. The artist's creations have become more site specific. He has taken this work even further by making necklaces, a change from his usual brooches, which, again, makes the pieces more responsive to the body. In many of the objects Friedlich further integrates the work and the body by exploiting the translucence of the glass, allowing the character of the pieces to be transformed by the fabric of the clothing the wearer chooses to place behind it.

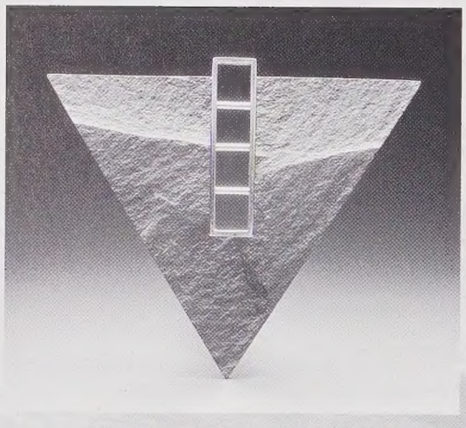


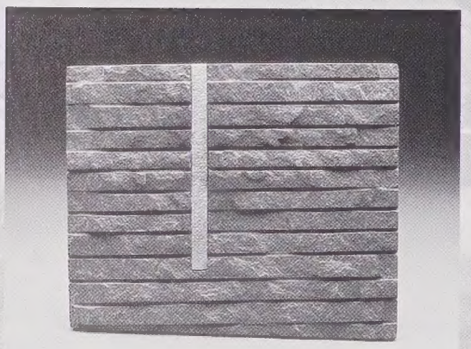
Interference Series Brooch, 1994
slate, 18k, 2 x 2 x 3/8"

FAR LEFT
Organic Series Brooches, 1995
slate, 18k, paint, sterling, 5½ x ¾ x ⅜"

LEFT TOP
Translucence Series Necklace, (pendant), 1994
glass, 22k, 18k, plastic, 2¼ x 2¼ x ⅜"

LEFT BOTTOM
Translucence Series Brooch, 1994
glass, 22k, 2 x 1⅞ x ⅜"





TOP
Interference Series Brooch, 1993
slate, 18k, 2¼ x 2¼ x ⅜"

BOTTOM
Interference Series Brooch, 1992
slate, 18k, 2¼ x 1⅞ x ⅜"

The painter Agnes Martin once said that the artist "creates to lend order to nature's often overpowering proclivity towards chaos".[6] Yet if we put each element of nature – animal, mineral, vegetable – under a microscope what do we see? Although often abstract to the human eye via its sheer complexity, the composition of any given element of nature is, generally, an extremely ordered structure. An artist such as Friedlich does not feel the often desperate yearning of many towards control over nature, but instead he evinces an acceptance of it. Though we are all creations of nature with both chaos and order abounding within us, there is a tendency within human consciousness towards order and logic; and where have we teamed these concepts except by viewing and experiencing the world around us?

This aesthetic sensibility has long been a key with which the Japanese have approached their work and their influence can readily be seen within Friedlich's production. A number of critics have thus jumped on the facile accusation of appropriation of a cultural aesthetic in which Friedlich has no real roots or true understanding. I believe this interpretation to be a surface one. As Arthur C. Danto has said, "...deep interpreters always look past the work of art to something else".[7] Any true knowledge of Japanese design points toward two influences – nature and materials – both chief sources of inspiration within Friedlich's oeuvre. In the west the tendency is to confront nature and to try and control it; in the east the tendency is to accept and enhance nature.

The factors which inform Friedlich's vision in particular are rather precarious when one tries to define them with any precision because they rest, chiefly, upon a certain refined sense of *balance.* To make this traditionally eastern aesthetic work within a given piece requires a great and deep cognition of this notion of *balance,* in visual terms a somewhat elusive word and concept at best. One can see a common thread running throughout the artist's work, which attests to an immense comprehension of this inclination, and the viewer is prone to think that this sensibility innate in Friedlich as it is so consistently and finely articulated.

Descriptive terms such as subtle, implying gentleness, and force, implying power, might seem at first glance contradictory terms. However, upon viewing any given piece which Friedlich has created one will see just why and how these adjectives are so applicable. To unify these seemingly incongruous elements of design and achieve any true harmony between them requires a sensibility such as Friedlich's, one marked with an exceptional respect for the immense grace and power of form.

Interpretation frequently assumes that there are various meanings within a given work which the creator himself may know nothing about. We could assume that Friedlich's vision of balance is purely a matter of personal taste. Balance, after all, was a significant element in the art to which he was drawn during the initial art classes he took at the University of Vermont, and in the objects he has chosen to decorate his home. Another profound and lasting influence from his early years of exploration and development was Hideyuki Oka's *How to Wrap Five More Eggs,* a book of photographs of traditional Japanese packaging. Friedlich refers to "...the simplicity and order of the Japanese garden, the stability and refinement of geometric forms, the delicacy and texture of handmade paper and the monumentality and power of geological formations", as being among his chief inspirations. He also notes: "In addition the stone sculpture of Isamu Noguchi, the abstract landscape canvases of Richard Diebenkorn and the natural site specific sculpture of Andy Goldsworthy are close to my heart."[8]

What do all of these references have in common?: Nature, and the materials of which it is comprised. One notices in Japanese packaging the extreme care and attention that is paid to each element, no matter how simple or seemingly unimportant. To the Japanese all objects are objects of value as they comprise elements of the life in which we are daily engaged. Thus, as everything we come into contact with effects us in some way or another, logically, the experience of that object should be a pleasant one.[9] Friedlich felt the richness in this experience of and attitude towards life and has chosen to create objects which can bring such experiences into wearers' and viewers' respective lives. His work reveals an appreciation for the smallest details and a vision which finds pleasure and meaning in the dramatically different composition which results from the smallest change – slightly moving a carved element, turning a small triangle of gold on its side.

Simplicity, order, elegance, balance are all words which come to mind upon experiencing certain works of art, pieces of music, literature, and places in the world both inside and out of nature. But what do these words mean to us, exactly what do they imply? Such precepts as those set forth in Zen philosophy would maintain that simplicity connotes truth.[10] *Truth* is, of course, an utterly subjective matter, but the element of simplicity which seems to guide Friedlich's aesthetic has to do with his respect for the poles of power and grace. He articulates his visions and representations of these poles without clouding his depictions with myriad superfluous or arbitrary embellishments of decoration, which would only lead the viewer's eye away from the *point* of the piece. That is *truth.* Incisive articulation of the notions of *order* and *balance,* such as those illustrated within Friedlich's oeuvre, have to do with acknowledging that intense opposites do, indeed, exist, but that they also coexist. Heeding this sense of *order* and *balance* lies in not making a choice between these poles in terms of preference for one way of thinking, seeing, or feeling at the cost of the other. It is instead a matter of acceptance, acknowledging and allowing that each pole exists; regarding each with justice and conceding to each their own validity.

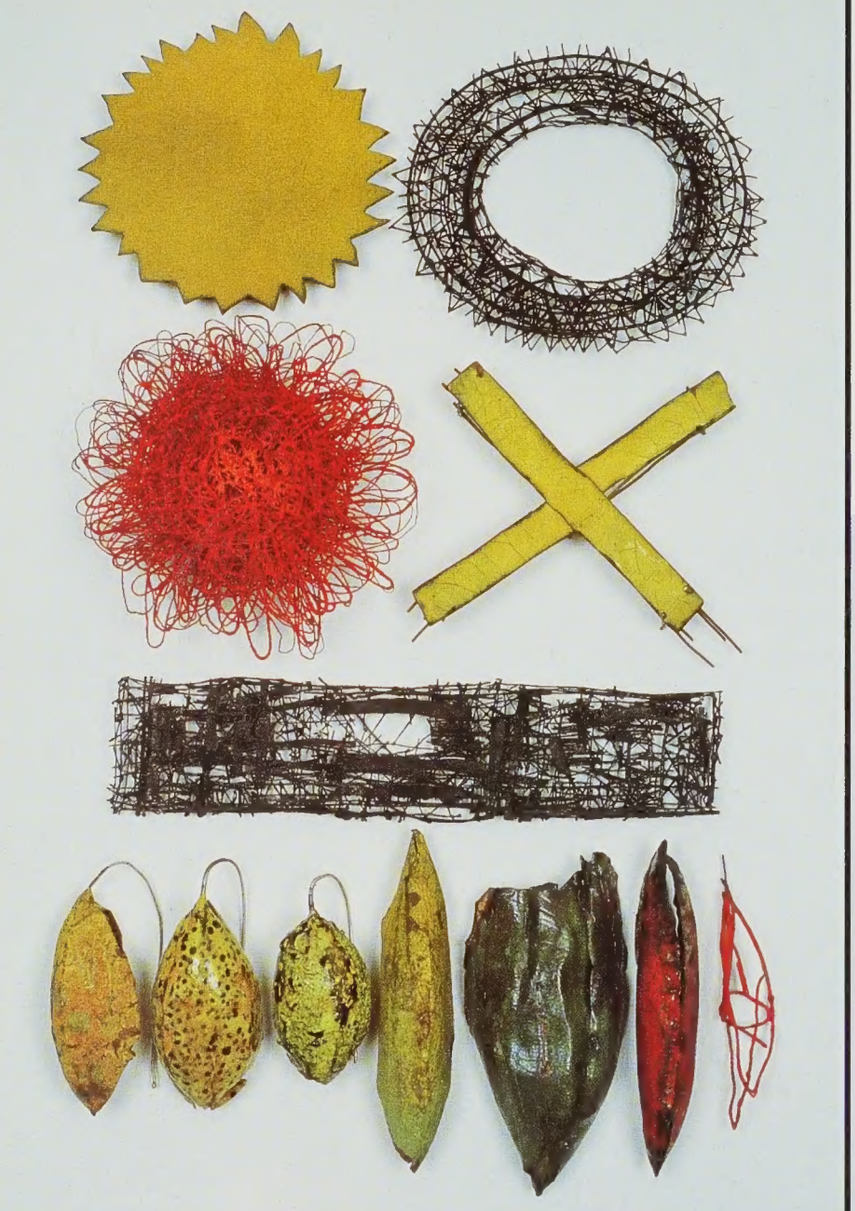
Within Friedlich's production one can both see and feel representations of true acceptance and true allowance, depictions which are dense with his visionary comprehension. We may call the gestures evinced within his work *elegant* because they do not manifest the strident call of man, the harsh call of an ego imposing itself upon a given piece. Friedlich's creations are a tribute to the world around him, a response to the richness and wonder which the experience of life has brought to him. His pieces are ways of reciting experience and passing it on as filtered and articulated through his own unique and fecund vision.

Paul Valery's essay "Man and the Sea Shell"[11] raises a question pertaining to a human being's reaction upon encountering a masterpiece of nature's creation. That initial question, if we were to acknowledge our naiveté, would be "Who made this?" Making immediately comes to mind, and with this awareness comes the conception of a consciousness that must have designed this thing, must have thought it out. But the only answer to the question of who designed a natural object would be, necessarily, a subjective one. There is a certain magic in the notion that the creation of nature and that which resides within it is an enigma forever irresolvable. Friedlich has felt this *magic,* and where he sees the intersection between human and creator is within this world, upon this earth we daily tread.

Claire Dinsmore is a writer who lives in Princeton, NJ.

Notes

1 Conversation with the Artist, January 17, 1995
2 Ibid.
3 Eric Neumann, *Art and the Creative Unconscious* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959), 152.
4 Conversation with the Artist, January 17, 1995.
5 Ibid.
6 Agnes Martin, *Catalogue of Retrospective Exhibition.* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992), 3.
7 Arthur C. Danto *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 47.
8 Donald Friedlich, Artist's Written Statement, 1995.
9 Hideyuki Oka, *How to Wrap Five More Eggs.* (New York and Tokyo: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1975), 7 - 13.
10 Shin'ichi Hisamatsu, *Zen and the Fine Arts.* (Tokyo: Kodansha International. Ltd., 1971).
11 Paul Valery, *An Anthology* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977),108-135.



ABOVE
TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT

Sun, 1991
iron wire, enamel

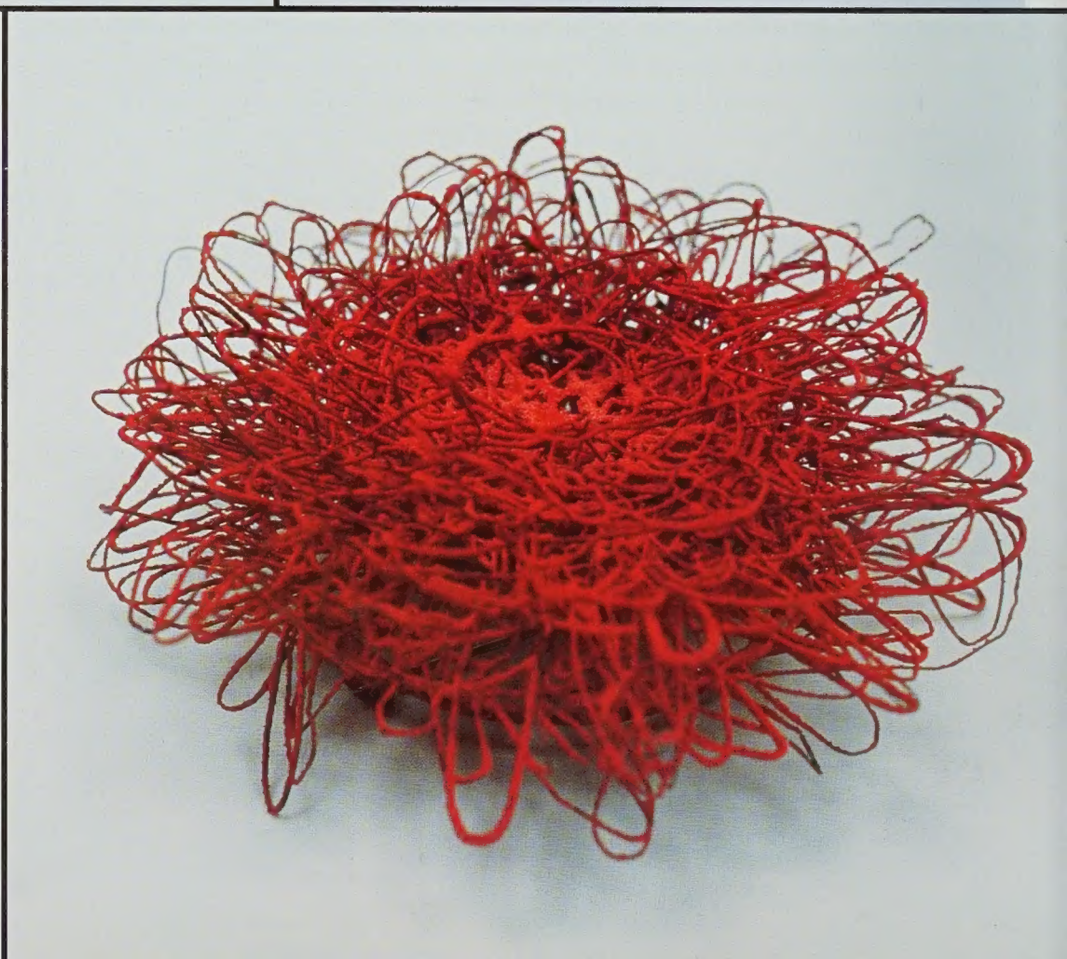
Non Gloriae Sed Memoriae, 1991
iron wire, enamel

Red Flower, 1993
iron wire enamel

X, 1991
copper, enamel

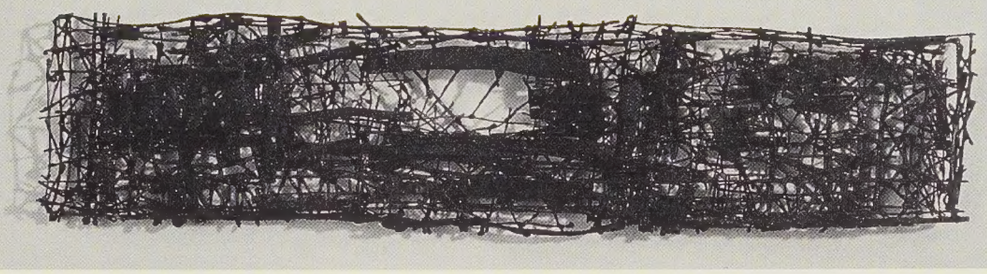
Non Memoriea Sed Gloriae USA, 1991
iron wire, copper, enamel

Untitled, (earrings, object), 1990-1994
copper, sterling, steel, enamel



Bettina Dittlmann

The Power of Subtlety



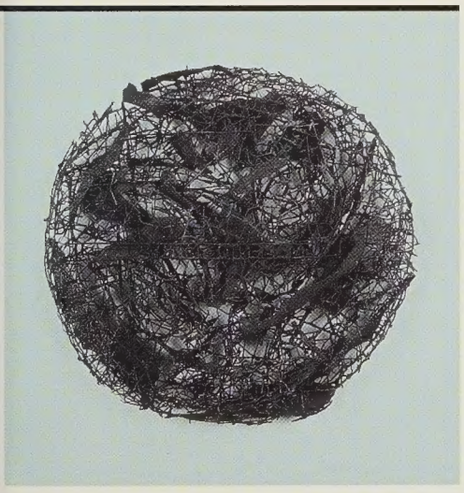
Text by Donald Friedlich

LEFT
Untitled, (object), 1990
iron wire, copper, enamel, 3⅓ x 3⅓"

BELOW LEFT
Red Flower, (object), 1993
iron wire, enamel, 4 x 4"

ABOVE RIGHT
Non Memoriae Sed Gloriae USA, 1991
iron wire, copper, enamel, 1⅓ x 6⅛"

BELOW
Memento Mori, 1993
iron wire, copper, enamel, 5⅛ x 5⅛"



At Rhode Island School of Design's recent exhibition of work by graduates of the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, objects by Bettina Dittlmann were noteworthy. While the jewelry of the other artists primarily commented sarcastically or ironically on jewelry, Dittlmann's more subtle work spoke with the most eloquent voice.

Working with iron binding wire, Dittlmann fabricates fine nest-like constructions. The blackened iron gives the pieces a fragile, pencil line quality. Although structured, the forms show none of the cool engineering of Peter Skubic or Anna Fraling's jewelry. Dittlmann's pieces appear to have been built not by a milling machine but by a bird. The hand is as evident as it is in writing or drawing. As the eye moves from shadow to light, the weight and density of the lines vary, maximizing the drawn quality, accentuating the negative spaces and highlighting the wires' remarkable delicacy.

Hermann Junger has frequently endeavored to bring spontaneity of mark and line into sheet metal, a material inherently resistant to such efforts. Dittlmann's choice of wire, which translates into line more naturally than sheet, extends Junger's formal inquiries into a less graphic and more three dimensional realm. Dittlmann's connection to Junger is understandable; she studied with him and with Otto Kunzli. In 1989, she interrupted her studies in Munich to spend eighteen months at SUNY New Paltz where she explored color and developed a sensitivity for enameling. She currently resides in Brooklyn, New York.

The forms and texts of Dittlmann's objects have also been influenced by the sixteenth century jewelry known as *memento mori* (literally, "remember, you must die"). On their surfaces these ornately filigreed and bejeweled rings, lockets and brooches bore Latin text such as *Non Gloriae Sed Memoriae* (Not Glory But Memory) and virginal or angelic figures. But belying the optimistic and life-affirming exteriors were the interiors depicting skeletons, worms and other symbols of death and decay.

Fascinated by *memento mori*'s dualistic images and text as well as by the delicate filigree and enameling, Dittlmann transported these qualities to the twentieth century. In her wreath-shaped piece also titled *Non Gloriae Sed Memoriae* she first connected her use of wire to *memento mori*'s filigree work. Simultaneously celebratory and funereal, the wreath form also resembles a coil of barbed wire evoking horrors of German history. Dittlmann continues to work frequently in circular formats, but sometimes ventures into other geometric or archetypal forms such as the cross.

Dittlmann's pieces often include text but, unlike most "word artists", her message becomes evident only upon close examination. Words are made part of the idea without becoming the entire idea. The objects are far more than platforms for words.

Most of Dittlmann's pieces are not intended to be worn. They are comfortable as objects. Yet, through her innovative treatment of material and subtle expression of ideas, Dittlmann has transformed historical jewelry into something contemporary and provocative. Her non-functional objects embrace and distill the essence of jewelry.

Donald Friedlich is a metalsmith living in Cranston, RI.

Jonathan Bonner's Conjunctions

ART AND SCIENCE

form and function

Text by Karen Chambers

"The creative process is basically a process of focus. ...If I look at things that I think are related, other work, other things in nature, things in industry, things that I think will trigger me off, feed those in, and intensely concentrate on it and do a lot of drawing in my sketchbook, the good ideas just blow in."

That's how Providence, Rhode Island-based sculptor Jonathan Bonner describes his creative process. The preparation is intense and leads to physical conclusions that seem absolutely right and apparently effortless.

In his latest body of work, *Noon Marks*, this transition from conceptual framework to elegant expression is beautifully manifested. Despite their austerity of form, Bonner's *Noon Marks* offer the viewer a wealth of associations. They could be discussed in purely formal terms and with references as diverse as Celtic stones, commemorative monoliths, garden sun dials, and the works of contemporary sculptors. They also make a connection between art and nature, but it is nature explained by science, not a Romantic's view.

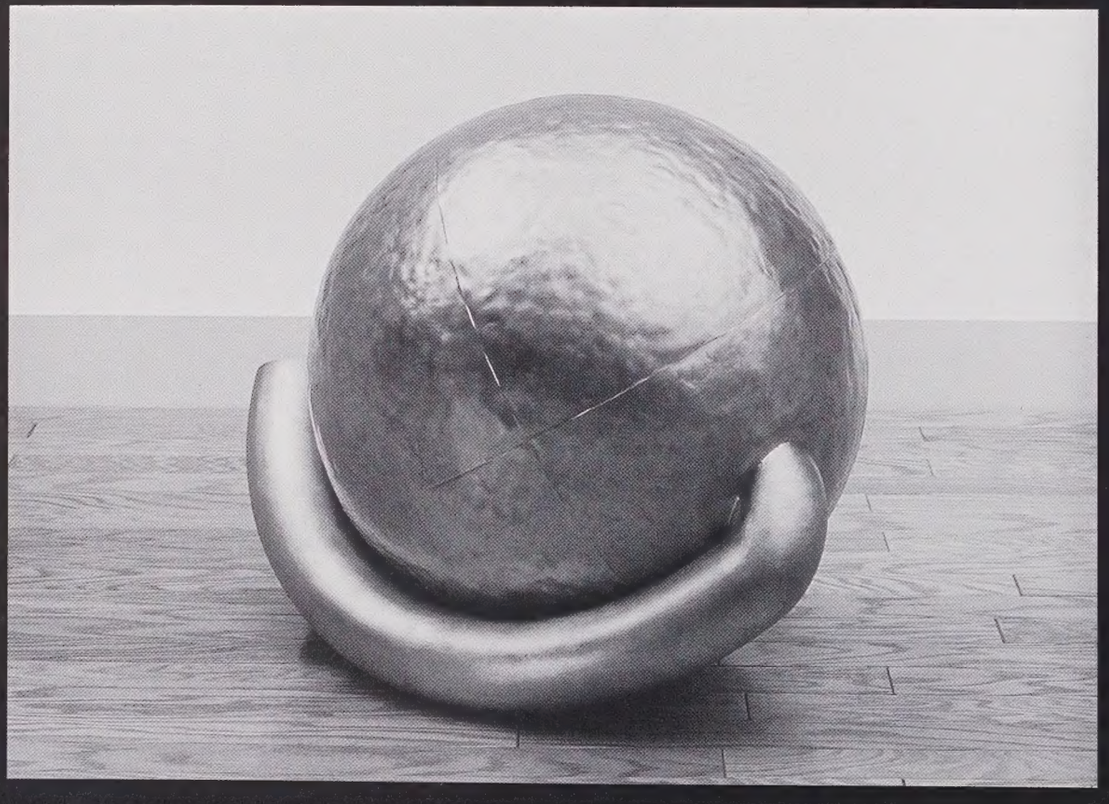
Bonner's intellectual starting point is "to mark the daily azimuth of the sun, when it is due south and at its highest point in the sky. When the shadow crosses the line on one day to the next day, the earth has done exactly one rotation. It indicates the solar system. It's a representation; it's evidence of what's going on and I find that to be intriguing."[1]

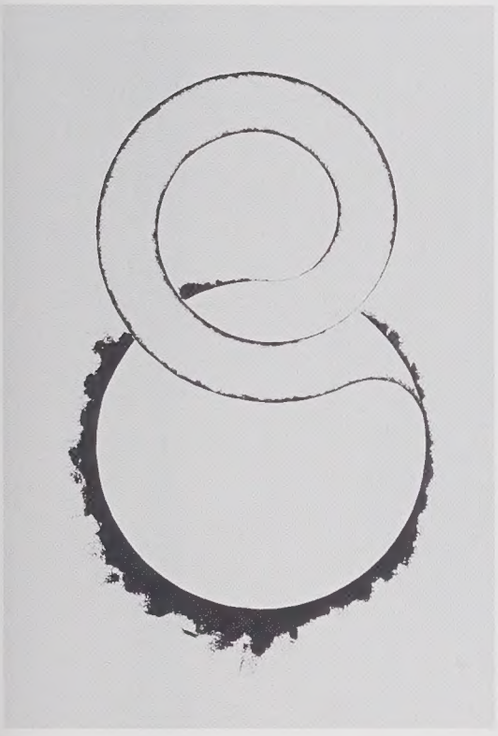
The *Noon Marks* interpret in tangible terms that abstract description of our world, translating the explanation of physical science into art. The rigorous mindset required of science is evidenced in the clarity of Bonner's forms, in the reduction to the defining characteristics of a sun dial – a simple support with a marker and line. The fact that Bonner's father is a microbiologist and his grandfather was a scientific glass blower makes this interest in the scientific seem legitimate. What Bonner has done is to marry art and science as *The Providence Journal-Bulletin* arts writer Bill Van Siclen noted in his review of Bonner's 1993 *mini-retrospective* at the Newport, Rhode Island, Art Museum.[2] He was responding to Bonner's 1992 sculptures that took as their inspiration mathematics and topology, Klein bottles and Möbius strips. With his background one expects Bonner to profess a deep curiosity about such complex issues, but the reality is his curiosity is from the point of view of a form maker. Bonner says simply that he found the Klein bottle "cool".

Named for the German mathematician Felix Klein who studied infinity, the Klein bottle can be described as a one-sided topological surface with no inside or outside. Bonner manifests it as a sphere with a hole that is a continuation of an attached U-shaped tube, making the interior surface continuous with the exterior. It is a physical representation of an abstraction and Bonner was drawn to the form before he started to explore its theoretical basis.

Other works in this 1992 series also illustrate this topological description. For example, *Inverted Bottle* is apparently a sphere pierced by a tube at one end. The tube and sphere, however, are a single surface, the tube rising from the interior as a continuation of the skin of the sphere. If one could tug on it, the sphere would, theoretically, be pulled into the tube, turned inside-out and destroyed. This possibility may not be readily apparent and for Bonner who disavows any interest in topology per se, it is the form that remains paramount. As Van Siclen writes, Bonner is "an artist whose fascination with science and mathematics is always firmly grounded in the traditions of craftsmanship and sculptural form."[3]

Noon Mark # 10, 1995
bronze, 64 x 12 x 12"





ABOVE
Klein, 1991
oil on paper, 30 x 32"

LEFT, TOP
Umbrella Stand #3, 1985
copper, epoxy paint, 18 x 10 x 18"

LEFT, BOTTOM
Bottle, 1992
brass, 24 x 28 x 24"

Bonner's commitment to craftsmanship contributes to his clear articulation of form. This allegiance to meticulous execution derives from his undergraduate days at the Philadelphia College of Art. "It was a very '60s philosophic approach, that everything was important", explains Bonner. "The back of a brooch was just as important as the front."

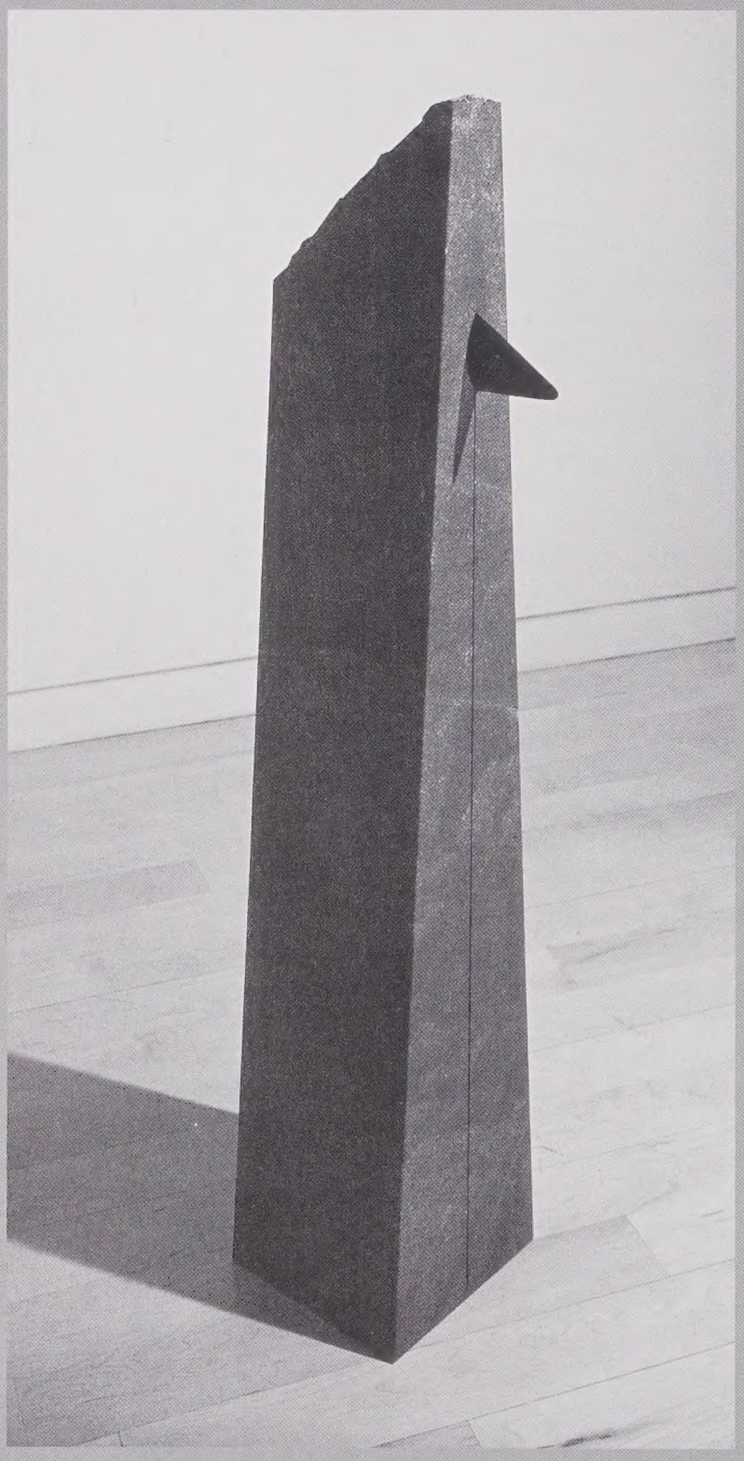
This attitude has shaped his work and perhaps rendered it unfashionable in today's art world, something that does not concern Bonner at all. He is very persuasive in his advocacy of fine craftsmanship: "It took eons for people to figure out how to craft various different materials, how to work various different materials. In one way it's appropriate to take advantage of that body of knowledge. The other thing is that to approach the nature of a material, the more skills you are aware of in working, the more you can take advantage of the material. To ignore it, for me, misses an opportunity. I'm not talking about overkill as in finish. What I'm trying to say, the more skills you have, the more, the wider, the better opportunity you have to get at the essence of the material."

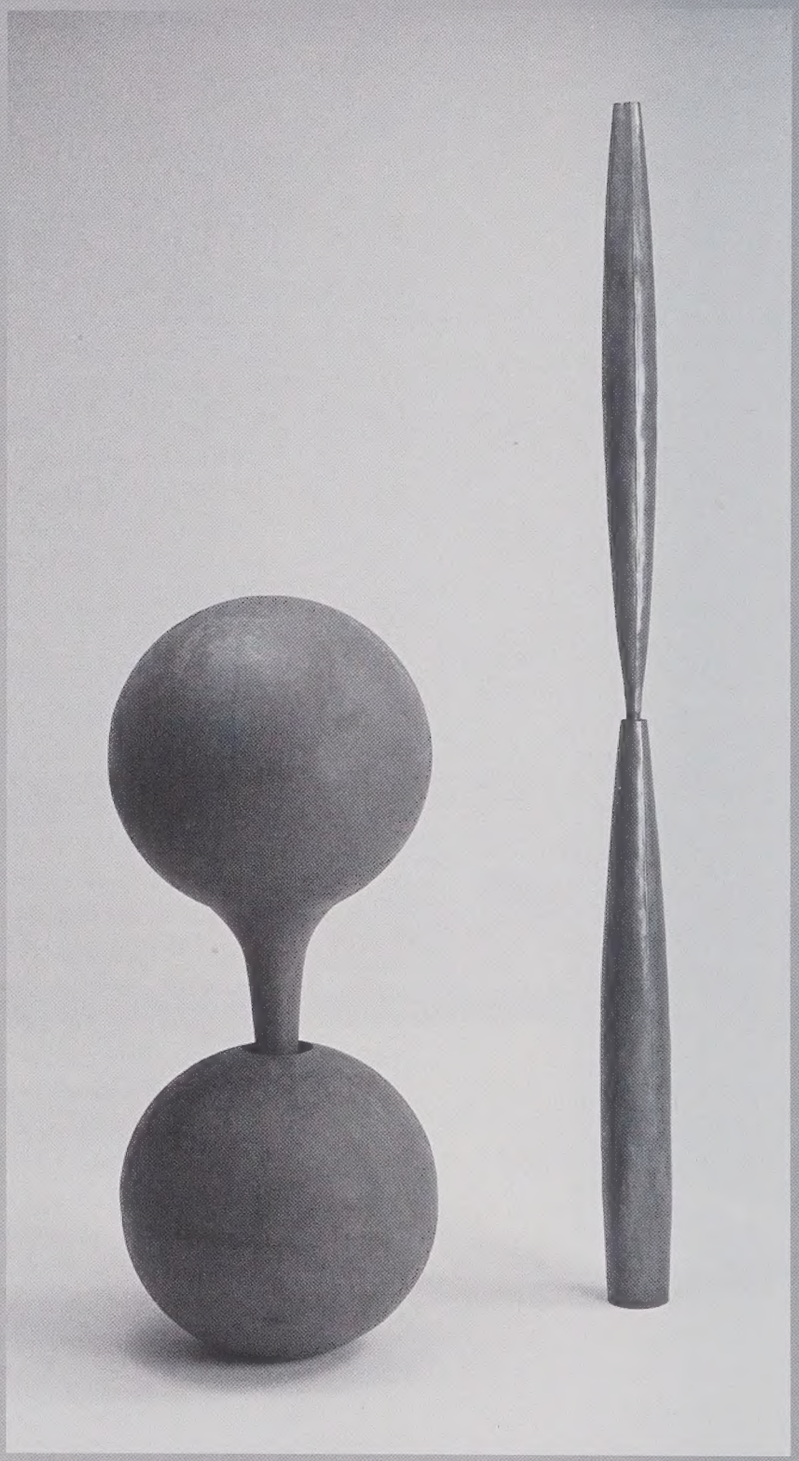
Metal is his material of choice, but he started his undergraduate career focusing on wood. Unlike many artists, he did not grow up knowing what he wanted to be. Bonner came to it in his late teens and at least partially because he had friends in art school. His principle teacher was Dan Jackson and he credits him with instilling a desire for perfectionism: "He demanded a lot and no matter what you did, he always wanted more. There was something about that experience that was tremendously beneficial."

At PCA Bonner minored in metalworking with Olaf Skoogfors. Skoogfors's emphasis on the totality of design has certainly left its mark on Bonner's work where each element is essential in both the sense of completing the whole and of being distilled to its simplest and most potent expression. In Bonner's latest series, the *Noon Marks*, he has fulfilled his theoretical brief with the simplest of elements – a monolith of stone or metal with an incised line and a marker to cast the requisite shadow, as important an element as any of the tangible ones. It could not be a simpler nor more powerful physical expression.

Bonner did not focus his attention on metal until enrolling in the M.F.A. program at RISD after completing his B.F.A. at the Philadelphia College of Art in 1971. He intended to pursue furniture making, but soon switched to metal in order to study with Jack Prip. Bonner is not inclined to wax poetic about metal as a medium, although he does admit that wood has certain limitations. "It has to be architected; you have to adhere to structure. Metal's structure is more congruent with the way I am. It's looser, offers more possibilities. Its appeal now is that I know it so well that I feel comfortable making work."

An important part of Bonner's creative process is his strategy of working in series, which he learned from Prip. After graduating from RISD with an M.F.A. in 1973, he did a number of "typical silversmithing commissions". These included two ceremonial maces for educational institutions, but as he wryly notes "the trade in maces has fallen off considerably since the 15th century". Beyond the fact that they did not generate further commissions, "the worst part was the work wasn't making a progression. I would do one piece that was one thing and another piece that was another and 20 slides looked like a group show. Not that I care about that, but my work wasn't progressing in a way that was fruitful." He also wanted to get away from the mode of working whereby he made drawings to be approved by the client and then executed the piece exactly. He "bagged it" and started a series of pieces where he just cut the metal, making the work more material-oriented and spontaneous.





FAR LEFT
Noon Mark #6, 1995
granite, bronze, 48 x 12 x 9"

LEFT
Inversion #6 and *#1*, 1993
copper
#6: 58 x 24 x 24"
#1: 96 x 6 x 6"

Even though he eschewed notoriety, by the beginning of the 1980s he found himself showing in galleries. This was also the beginning of his well-received weathervane series of which he has made approximately 200. Like all of his work, even the most overtly sculptural, there is an element of function to the form. The first weathervane came about because his father had one on his shed that needed to be repaired. Bonner who had been interested in the format made him a new one. As with the *Noon Marks*, all of the weathervanes can function, but as Bonner says, "Nobody who bought the weathervanes cared which way the wind was blowing, but they *do* tell you which way the wind is blowing".

The idea of function does indeed underlie Bonner's work in an almost seditious manner. Even in his topologically inspired sculptures of 1992, the critic Eleanor Heartney espies it as an underlying concern: "No longer actually functional, his works instead investigate the idea of functionalism through reference to objects whose forms have taken shape under the logic of a specific purpose."[4] Bonner isn't interested in a Romantic view of function, recalling the decorative arts heritage, or appropriating forms. Rather he distills the concept and expresses it in equally reductivist formal terms.

His vessels of the early 1990s fulfilled the basic requirements of a vessel by containing space and having an access point even though their forms were initially read as purely sculptural. In *House Cat,* the viewer perceives the object as an archetypal house form. By painting it in orange tiger stripes, the chimney turns into a tail and the peaked roof into an arched back. This touch of whimsy is not uncommon in Bonner's oeuvre. Early on there were umbrella stands of comically menacing, open-jawed sharks and crocodile candle sticks, but the humor derived from Bonner's interest in the essential form, which is the basis for caricature as well as a hallmark of Bonner's career.

There are other points of view for Bonner's aesthetic explorations, for his series of series. They can be seen as an expression of material and technique. They can be discussed in light of their theoretical and visual sources. And there is the humor with which Bonner endows even his most abstract and serious work i.e.: *Five Bottles* from 1992, with its allusion to Brancusi's *Endless Column,* is not devoid of humor. Regardless of the point of view, the forms themselves always demand our intellectual attention as well as eliciting a more emotional response. This is where Bonner excels, endowing his simple, elegant, skillfully crafted forms with enough content to induce contentment in the mind and eye of the beholder, regardless of their focus.

Karen Chambers is a writer on art and craft who lives in New York, NY.

NOTES

1 All quotes from the artist are from a telephone interview with the author which took place on 12 July, 1995.
2 Bill Van Siclin "Jonathan Bonner weds art, science", *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, 28 May 1993, p. 13.
3 Ibid.
4 Eleanor Heartney, *Jonathan Bonner, New Work*, New York: Peter Joseph Gallery, 1992, p. 4.

Artisans in Silver: The Vase

National Ornamental Metals Museum
Memphis, TN
June 25 – August 13, 1995

Reviewed by Debora Gordon

Inside the National Ornamental Metals Museum the arctic blast from an overworked air conditioner and the cool beauty of sterling silver greeted each visitor to the summer exhibition. It is fitting that for the last three years the Society of American Silversmiths has chosen this museum, a former marine hospital, to launch its annual traveling exhibition. This is the first year, since its inception in 1989, however, that the society has chosen a theme which focuses on a specific form. Thirty-one members are represented in "Artisans in Silver: The Vase".

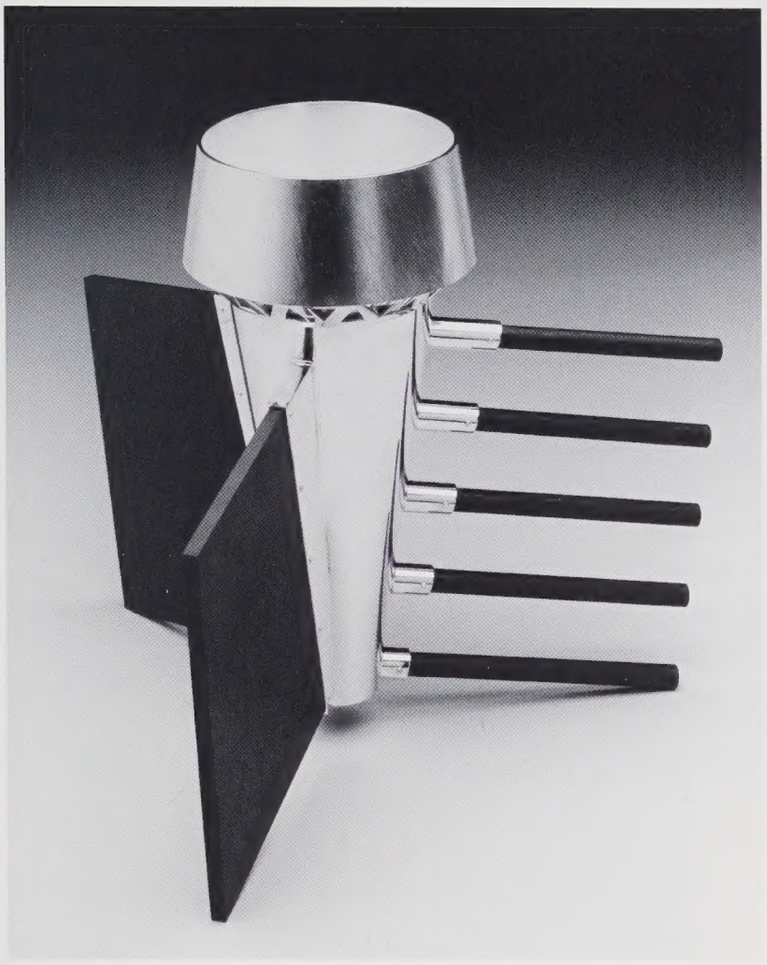
The influence of twentieth-century art can be found in many of the works. Michael Banner's untitled polished sterling vase is a masterpiece in minimalism, albeit on a small scale. Banner is one of several artists who abandons the traditional cylindrical form in favor of an alternative vessel with stem support. A thin wire doubled with a gentle curve, well capable of supporting a single stem, sprouts from a circular water well.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Jeffrey Herman
Vase, 1994
sterling, pearls
5 x 3"
Photograph by Arling Studio

Boris Bally
Trapesius Vase with Ribs, 1994
sterling, durranodized aluminum
10 x 11½ x 10½"
Photograph by David L. Smith

William N. Frederick
Blooming Buds, 1994
sterling
13 x 8¼"
Photograph by Robert Hurling



Boris Bally's characteristic style is represented by a contradiction of forms – a retro-Memphis design of anatomical origin. *Trapesius Vase with Ribs* is forged sterling with durranodized aluminum. Billie Jean Theide's *Object of Consequence,* a graduated cylinder of matte-finished sterling silver with copper line markings on a hexagonal base, offered pleasant pop relief. While Theide may have found her inspiration in the chemistry lab, most of the artists in this exhibition drew from another branch of science: botany.

A three-piece set by Marilyn da Silva, *Devil's Garden II,* consisted of fantastic forms of sterling and copper with a liver-of-sulpher patina highlighted by touches of colored pencil. These forms are not unlike the living creatures and plants found on ocean reefs with one noteworthy exception – da Silva's spiny urchin has whimsical overtones particularly in the steel upholstery tacks serving as its prickly protection.

Roger H. Horner's *Foxglove* takes both its sinister beauty and its shape from its floral namesake which has a dual chemistry that can serve as either medicine or poison. The piece, mounted on a basalt base, features a focal point of sterling and copper mokume-gane with a exquisite moiré pattern.

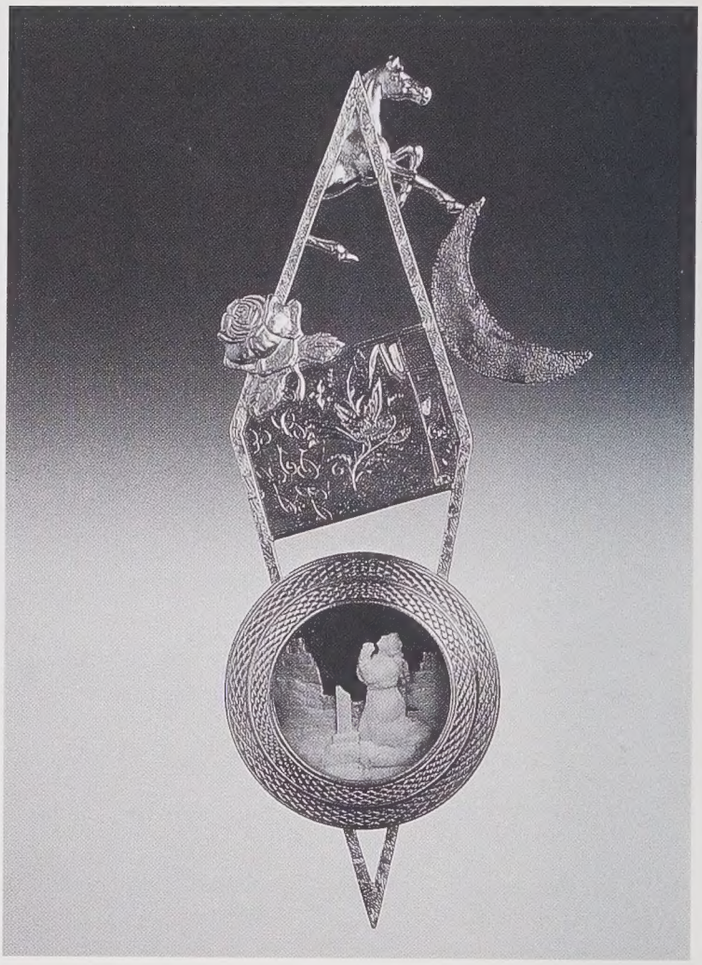
A second, even more ambitious, work in mokume-gane, *Blossoming* by John C. Marshall, rises twenty-two inches including its black marble base. The wood grain-like pattern created on this stately abstract design is particularly strong and sensual along the irregular inner lip of the vessel.

All of the works in the exhibition are free-standing, with the exception of one fragile untitled piece by Lin Stanionis, which hangs by a delicate sterling silver chain. The hand-finished vessel has two openings with petals and a plastic snakeskin pattern constricting its shoulders.

All in all, the exhibition is a fine testament to the artists' passion for the medium and a faithful but often single-minded commitment to form.

"Artisans in Silver: The Vase" travels to The Arkansas Arts Center's Decorative Arts Museum in Little Rock (through October 1), The Newark Museum (November 8, 1995 through February 4, 1996), and the American Silver Museum, Meriden, Connecticut (March 2 through April 28, 1996).

Debora Gordon is the editor of NUMBER: An Independent Quarterly of the Visual Arts *and teaches at The University of Memphis.*



Primer, (brooch), 1993
silver, gold plate,
cameo, brass, found objects
5½ x 2½ x ¾"

Alan Burton Thompson

Jewelerswerk Galerie
Washington, DC
June 8 – June 29, 1995

Reviewed by Alyssa Dee Krauss

Alan Burton Thompson's kitsch and surreal brooches are like scrapbooks of memorabilia. They are sentimental, nostalgic and romantic. His work speaks of the accumulation of souvenirs, the stories they tell and the lives they commemorate.

His underlying aesthetic model is common kitsch. He has a fascination with awards, commemorative objects, and souvenirs from important events. Preferring *faux* to fine, he appropriates bits and pieces from cast off, garage-sale, or flea-market curiosities. Miniature dice, birds, spaceships, boats, and female figures are just some of the fragments and representations that are scattered throughout and carefully collaged into his surreal tableaux and sentimental landscapes. Although Thompson says he has little concern for formal issues, the diverse elements which make up his brooches marry and visually balance one another exceptionally well, indicating a well-trained and self-conscious eye.

Thompson's former works more closely resembled the prize ribbons, military medals, and Victorian mourning pins which originally inspired him. The brooches in this exhibition are less overtly referential, making it difficult to recognize his important allusions. However, the format of the brooch and the accessibility of jewelry pinned on the chest complement the personal and public nature of his ideas.

Thompson regards his brooches as highly charged mementos of successfully surviving life. Garnishing the history that is implicit in his materials and the sources from which he acquires them, he romanticizes each and every fragment he uses by imagining its picturesque past. These histories become metaphors for all of life's adventures as he places the fragments into new contexts and adds yet another chapter onto the romance.

It is difficult to find the meaning or a rational thread that ties together the fragments of these surreal badges-of-honor, and admittedly I became lost trying to *read* their stories. Accordingly, Thompson knows that the brooches will not necessarily be understood exactly as he conceived them, though he hopes that the collection and juxtaposition of these objects will call to the viewer's unconscious and communicate the artist's ideas.

Is Thompson suggesting that the history of a material actually or visibly transforms the meaning or value of that material, or is he simply sentimentalizing? Sentimentality and romance are part of the legacy of jewelry. Thompson's work explores the qualities that most of us, at one time or another, have attributed to a piece of jewelry or to a found object. The meanings we ascribe to our trinkets are subjective, yet simultaneously very real. Although many of Thompson's materials are not intrinsically valuable, their sentimental preciousness is emphasized when they are used as components for jewelry. For a jeweler to create work which is already imbued with sentimentality, before the wearer brings his/her own story to it, is no small task. Yet here in Alan Burton Thompson's brooches, sentiment is a first and lasting impression.

Alyssa Dee Krauss makes and writes on jewelry from Lafayette, NJ.

Botanical Study III: Cucurbita Maxima,
(teapot, creamer, sugar bowl, spoon, tea ball, tray), 1995
silver, corkscrew willow
approx. 12 x 18⅗"
Photograph by Richard Nicol

Botanicals: Hollowware by Candace Beardslee

MIA Gallery
Seattle, WA
June 1 – July 2, 1995

Reviewed by William Baran-Mickle

The centerpiece of Candace Beardslee's petit solo exhibition was a six-piece service made of sterling silver and pealed, corkscrew willow. The set follows the exhibition's theme of botanicals. The gently gestural willow is a whitish, opal-like material which beautifully compliments the vegetable imagery of the containers, tray, and spoon.

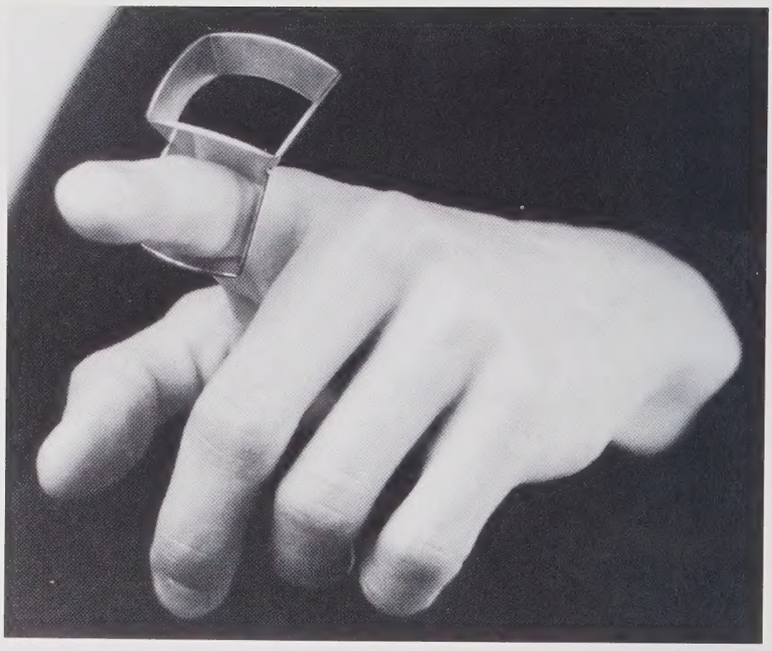
There is an overall lusciousness that comes from the three, bright, complex forms, each sitting in its own indented location on an undulating tray. The frosty, 12 x 18 inch tray is covered by a field of chased leaves with a stippled background. Its drastically rounded edges and uneven plane lend the piece a comforting warmth and leaf tips occasionally extend beyond the edges. The attention to the entire form in terms of texture and the pure sheen of the surface surely exceeds most other materially focused endeavors and Beardslee accomplished this difficult feat with but one weakness, the tray's feet. Their resolution stopped short of the confidence and thoroughness displayed in the rest of the work.

The tea pot, creamer, sugar bowl, and tea infuser all have gourd-like forms. They are well delineated, robust, and thoughtfully and stylistically adapted to the necessary functions. Large lids provide exceptional access as well as visual delight, each has a set of constricted convex forms radiating from a willow knob. The overall effect would be like that of an Alice in Wonderland Tea Party were it not for their warm, serene, and solid presence.

The botanical theme shifted to bud and flower motifs in the three other works in the show. Two were vases which utilize intricate leaf forms to create visual variety and stimulation against the broad, gently curving, plannished surfaces of the bowl. They, too, are examples of highly controlled smithing and well executed construction. One very sensual vase, *Botanical Study I,* only 4 inches tall, is a complex double-bowl form created in a lotus blossom motif. A salt and pepper set, reminiscent of immature pine cones that have subtle but distinctive surface modulations, completes the exhibition.

Beardslee has completed and offered for view what traditionally could be considered the *journeyman piece,* a tour-de-force hollowware set of integrated, functional design. This design was traditionally to be approved by a master silversmith. The apprentice's successful technical completion of the service was considered the passage into the masters class in the guild system. It seems rare to see this done today in American metals departments. Having a long history of making jewelry and modestly scaled hollowware, Beardslee has brought a rare maturity to her task. The rigorous concentration exhibited in this body of work points to a bright future of creating beautiful work.

William Baran-Mickle is a metalsmith who lives in Rochester, N.Y.



Michael Boy
Ring, 1995
sterling

Aspects of the Series: 33 European Artists Explore Jewelry as Product Design

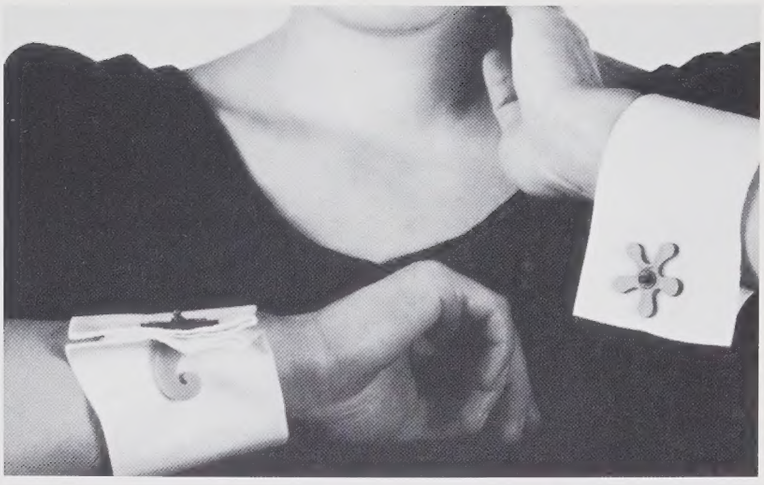
Bona Keane Decorative Arts
Portland, OR
July 6 – 29, 1995

Reviewed by Jan Baum

Stylized floral cufflinks of strong, dynamic form made of orange and olive green acrylic; three individual bracelets composed of numerous identical elements executed in felt, bronze or thin sheets of red acrylic; a necklace and bracelet of curving stainless steel springs spaced by wooden balls with a worn orange patina; fun and functional; studied and experimental; tension and inertia: *Aspekte von Serie* is an exhibition presenting the work of thirty-three young designers. There is an air of risk, study, and experimentation present. Within this work the individuals who were able to solve problems of design and imbue their work with an individual personality created work that stood apart demonstrating both the breadth and depth of the designers.

"Aspects of the Series: 33 European Designers Explore Jewelry as Product Design" was an exhibition of works from a project originating out of an educational assignment. All thirty-three artists were in some manner under the tutelage of Herman Hermsen at the Fachhochschule in Dusseldorf. Simply stated, the project was to design jewelry that functioned in a series and which could be mass produced or created in multiples. I did find what I expected when thinking of European design: minimal, cold forms, stainless steel and flat sterling silver- that mysteriously and innovatively attaches to the body; but, something else was happening as well. The materials and innovative solutions exhibited a current attitude of cool reserve.

The most successful work pays homage to the European roots of many of the craftspeople, exhibiting strong design and mastery of materials and technical virtuosity. Prevalent in the most successful work is a sense of spirit; prominent is a decorative flair. Ursula Issig's brooches draw the viewer in with their scalloped, wavy edge; win them over with their innovative and functioning method of attachment; and endear them with their slight yet varied enameled surfaces. The stylized floral cuff links by Monica Ernst are well designed and functional. In no way do they push the boundaries of wearability, though they are decidedly decorative with their sinuous curlicue stems, stylized flower heads, and orange and green acrylic. They are fun. All of Ernst's work in this show exhibits an interest in the decorative. Executed in sterling silver and anodized aluminum, another pair of her cuff links is reminiscent of a single element of wrought iron work: two elements simply riveted together to create an elegant piece. Uli Biskop links bent stainless steel springs with wooden balls to create a necklace and bracelet, which undulates in a tight repetitive, circular pattern. The worn orange finish on the wooden balls softens the coolness of the springs. The combination of the tension filled springs and the familiarity of the toy-like balls gives the piece an overriding feeling of serious playfulness. Petra Eberz's silver brooches and earrings, curling forward and backward, are reminiscent of the wrought iron work that might frame a balcony on a house, though these pieces frame a single pearl. Not at all cumbersome they use space very well, forming different patterns and eye catching forms. All are good examples of successful solutions to the problem.



Monica Ernst
Cuff Links, 1995
Plexiglas

Petra Eberz
Brooch, 1995
silver, felt, pearl
1½"

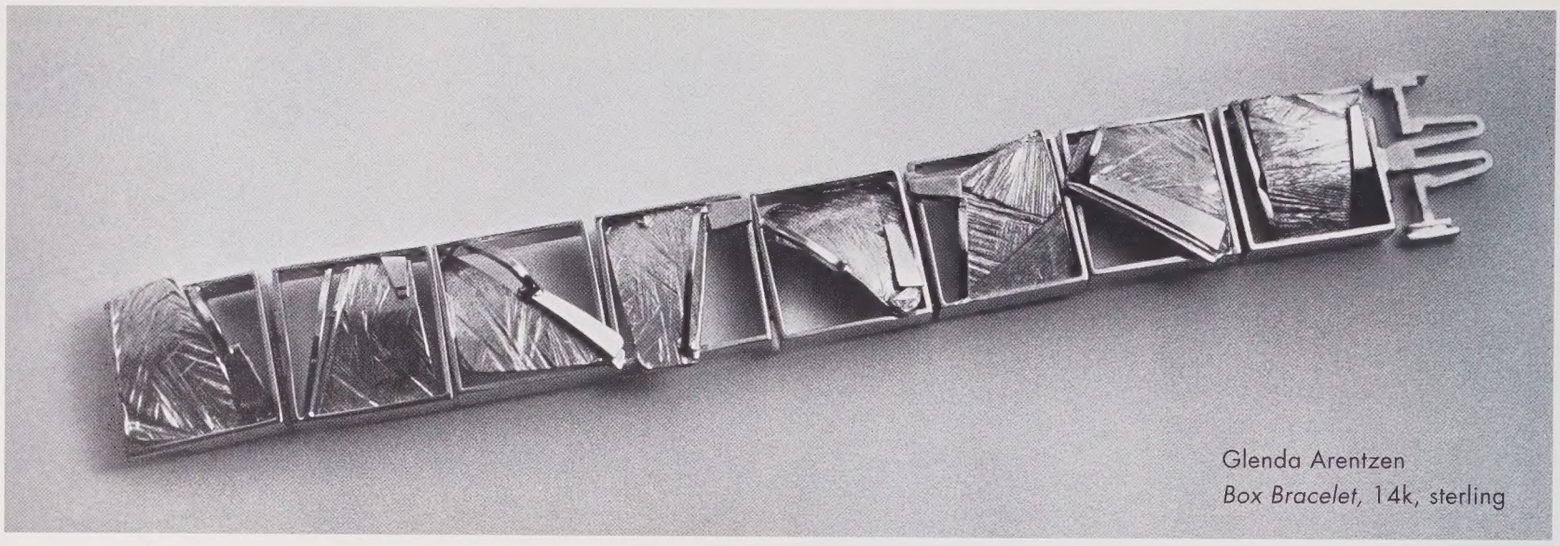
A central goal at the Fachhochschule is to educate and produce thinking designers. Thus, students are instructed to think and design in a conceptual manner. While the highest goal is to create one-of-a-kind work or pieces of *unicum,* embedded in the philosophy of the school is a strong emphasis on the pragmatic. (Unicum in a one-of-a-kind piece of work is defined by Hermsen as: "...originating in personal and artistic sources and is an expression of a consideration of content or the result of an artistic form of expression.)[1] Since nearly the inception of the school in 1974, the design of serial products has been a requirement. Whether a student of product design or visual communication, all students participate in a serial design course. The ultimate challenges are to create a design that technologically can be readily reproduced; to master and use materials that are interesting, desirable, cost effective, and appeal to a wide market; and to imbue the design with a sense of spirit or personality.

The work in this exhibition falls within a few categories. The first is jewelry that is well designed with a pronounced sense of spirit and decorative flair. The second, which comprises the majority of the objects, is work which relies on a previously well established European aesthetic. For some this historical precedence is too strong. Falling under its spell, these craftspeople's primary focus seems to be on how the piece attaches to the body while considerably less attention is given to materials or form. Others under the spell find their challenge in creating formal and repetitive (and sometimes very minimal) elements and arranging them in pleasing patterns. In the final category is jewelry which pushes the limits. This, of course, frequently results in odd and idiosyncratic work. Materials are usually the point of departure for this practice: odd plastic forms, thin bass wood, an iron wire and pipe cleaner combination, etcetera. An example is a necklace constructed of a clear PVC foil and black elastic bands. Worn close to the neck, these random linear forms twist and poke the neck rendering the piece neither comfortable nor desirable, though carrying such an object to fruition and taking such risks should be commended.

Although serial design is not the goal in many fields, it is a way of making a living. It offers valid challenges and it is an aspect of American jewelry and metalsmithing design education that is frequently found missing. This exhibition, among other things is an opportunity to see strong European design and excellent jewelry mechanisms. It is worth our time and energy. The exhibition will continue on to other venues.

Jan Baum teaches and produces her work in Portland, OR.

[1]Herman Hermsen, *Aspects of the Series* (Dusseldorf: Fachhochschule, 1994) p. 11.



Glenda Arentzen
Box Bracelet, 14k, sterling

Masters' Vision: Glenda Arentzen and Ruth Gikow

Sheila Nussbaum Gallery
Milburn, NJ
April 22 - May 20, 1995

Reviewed by Alex Wolf

Last spring, Sheila Nussbaum Gallery showed jewelry and drawings by Glenda Arentzen and paintings by Ruth Gikow, in an exhibition entitled "Masters' Vision".

In *Box Bracelets* from the Linear series, Arentzen sets up a dialogue between texture, form, and movement within both a square overall shape and within the square, which comprises each link of the bracelet. Within the links, furiously scratched and gauged, fabricated and cast shapes overlap and abut. Using 14k, 24k, and silver, she explores the limits of the materials and the consequences of intense interaction. Similar necklaces of linked squares, and single square cufflinks were also on display.

Square, framed drawings in traditional drawing media, mirroring the shapes and surfaces of the *Box Bracelets*, were hung on either side of the jewelry case in a small alcove. Beautiful patches of lines were framed by warm gray mattes and simple metal frames. Ranging from delicate pencil to bold charcoal, these lines came to life, animated within the spaces created by washes of ink, vellum, and foregrounds of shining gold. The choice of classic materials and their classic abstract use suggested a simplification and a reduction of gestures to almost elemental kinds of movements and marks. Every combination of strokes resulting from the interaction of mediums established a vocabulary of line, which was the basis for a complex dialogue. The marks in the drawings related to the marks in the necklaces and cuffs and thus gave insight into the artist's working methods.

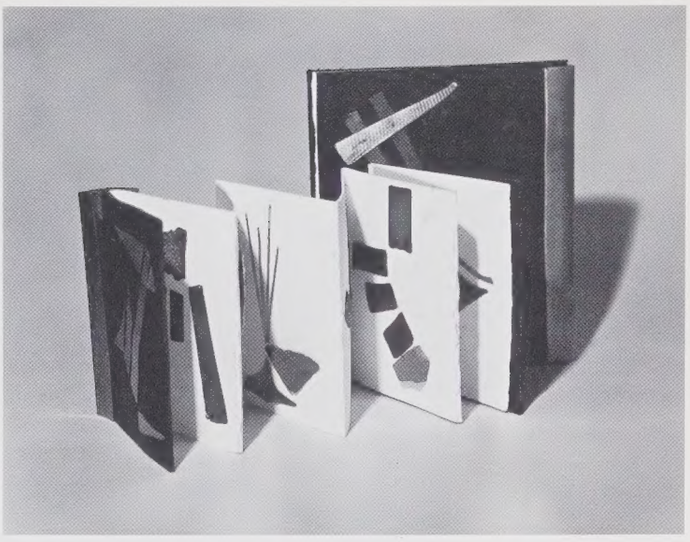
It is unfortunate that although the jewelry and drawings were satisfying alone and even more satisfying and enlightening when seen together, the drawings were more ambitious in scale and, in my opinion, more successful. Arentzen started her journey of expression by defining the elements beforehand in the drawings, and she continued them in metal – yet, the metal in this series did not live up to her vision on paper. Because of the range and complexity, which the pencil, varied ink weights, thick black charcoal, and larger format allows, the marks on paper have a more mystical and intimate dimension In the jewelry the range of marks and different metal colors seemed too subtle and intimate in dimension to continue that dialogue.

Both the jewelry and drawings have an abstract fifties feel, which, suprisingly, maintains freshness even today. The simplicity, raw energy, and the underlying spiritual quest of that period can still create a vital contemporary work. Reminiscent of book covers by Elaine Lustig Coen, recently on view at Cooper-Hewitt, or sculpture by Louise Nevelson, Arentzen's works continue that era's struggle to define a vocabulary for the modern in the visual and commercial arts.

That freshness seemed missing from Arentzen's other jewelry on display, which combined the marriage of metals with fantasy cut stones. That work was less compelling because the artist's intent seemed less clear. Maintaining balance without boredom, the formal restrictions of the boxes literally seemed to frame some of Arentzen's concerns, but, the odd shapes and busyness of multiple processes seemed only to create a meandering without purpose. These pieces would have benefited from streamlining. For example, the fantasy cuts could have had a stronger formal relationship to the shapes and patterns created by the marriage of metals. The stone and metal techniques have not been integrated into the designs to the point of indivisibility. As they stand they have an art-jewelry/craft look, a lack of focus and too much diverse technique, or as Salieri described Mozart's music, in the film *Mozart:* "too many notes". It is disappointing to see the more technically complicated works not live up to the more simple pieces because the potential appeared to be greater. I look forward to seeing these issues resolved by Arentzen in future pieces.

Alex Wolf is a writer and designer and writer who resides in New York, NY.

Two Double Rings, 1994
sterling, turquoise, black onyx
1 x 1½"
Photograph by Jerry Maddox



Little Book No. I
and *Bigger Book No. II,* 1995
leather, handmade paper,
nu-gold, brass, cooper, roofing slate,
sandstone, rag paper
Left: 5¾ x 6⅛" extends to 41½"
Right: 7¾ x 8½" extends to 41½"
Photograph by Jerry Maddox

Jan Maddox: Media Explorations

Montgomery College Gallery
Rockville, MD
March 27 – April 14, 1995

Reviewed by Lisa Vershbow

"Media Explorations" at the Montgomery College Gallery featured the work of metalsmith Jan Maddox and ceramic artist Don Montano. The two artists were a good match, the show well installed and, true to the title it afforded the viewer a rich overview of color and texture.

This was an important show for Maddox. Last spring she retired after 24 years as Professor of Art at Montgomery College. The exhibition reflected her artistic development during her distinguished tenure. In looking through the show, I was reminded of the responsibility of a teacher to expose students to a wide range of techniques and materials. This artist's development reflects a continuing process of exploration.

The exhibition was loosely chronologically organized, with pieces grouped together according to type. The artist's earlier pieces – such as the hollow geometric forms, which are so solid in appearance – contrasted interestingly with the more recent works of collages and books, in which metal shapes have softened and broken loose from their wearable forms.

Although the pieces in the show were greatly varied, Maddox's designs reflect a recurrence of contrasting textures. Many pieces embody a two-part motif; some are literally two-sided, including many of the rings and brooches.

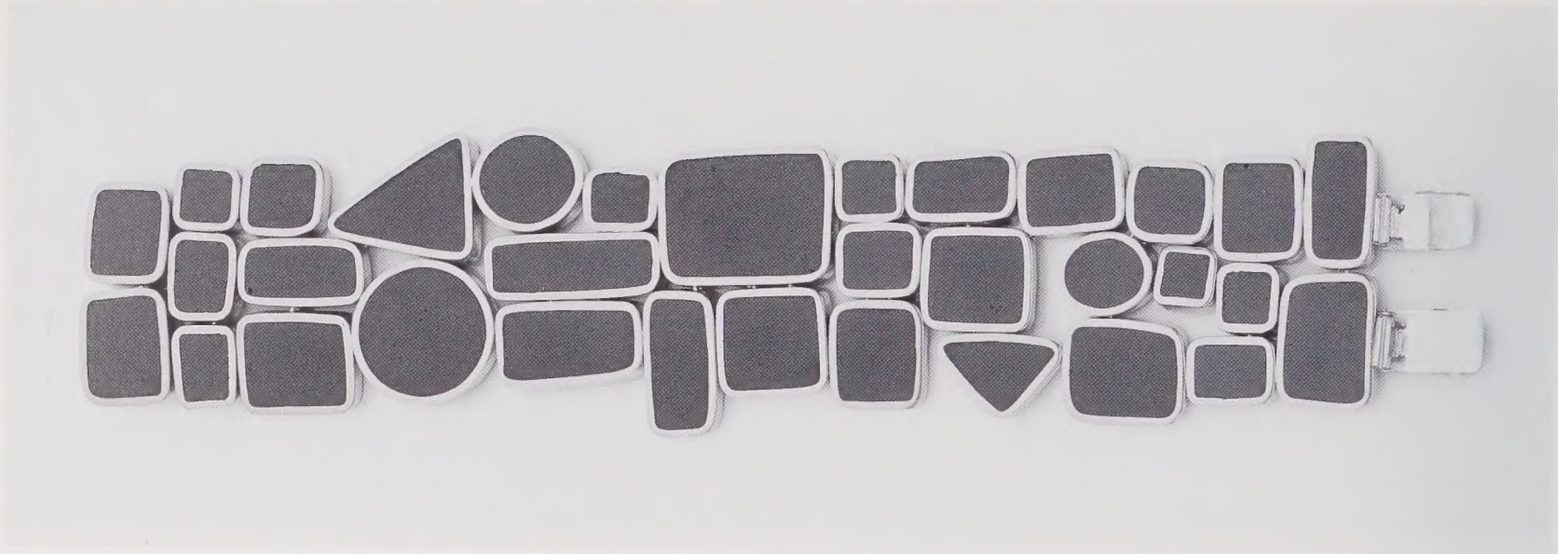
The series of *Bipartite Brooches* were the key pieces in the exhibition, both for their design and for their technique. These two-part brooches evoke a sense of harmony. They echo the geometric shapes of the earlier *Hollow Pin Forms,* but the shapes have become irregular. Their surfaces have been softened by textures and punctuated with a variety of colored stones. The beautifully constructed brooches of this series are at once both massive and light, the two parts indispensable to one another. The box forms are seamless and the edges crisp. They are surprisingly light and comfortable to wear. The scatter-pin backs ensure that they can be worn in any direction, allowing the wearer the final decision in the design process.

The two-part design was also represented in the rings. These rings are fun, some cover two fingers, while others have two parts on one finger. Though large, they are amazingly comfortable and wearable.

The most recent group in the show were the collages and books. This is a new direction for Maddox, a total departure from the solid forms in her jewelry. While made from an amazing variety of materials, from metals and slate, to handmade paper, these works are spare in design. The images seem to float on the crisp white backgrounds. They are quite beautiful, and I hope to see more.

The show left the viewer with a clear appreciation for what the artist has accomplished. Exploring her craft from many different angles, Jan Maddox has always expressed her love for design and the medium.

Lisa Vershbow is a Washington DC metalsmith and current president of The Washington Guild of Goldsmiths.



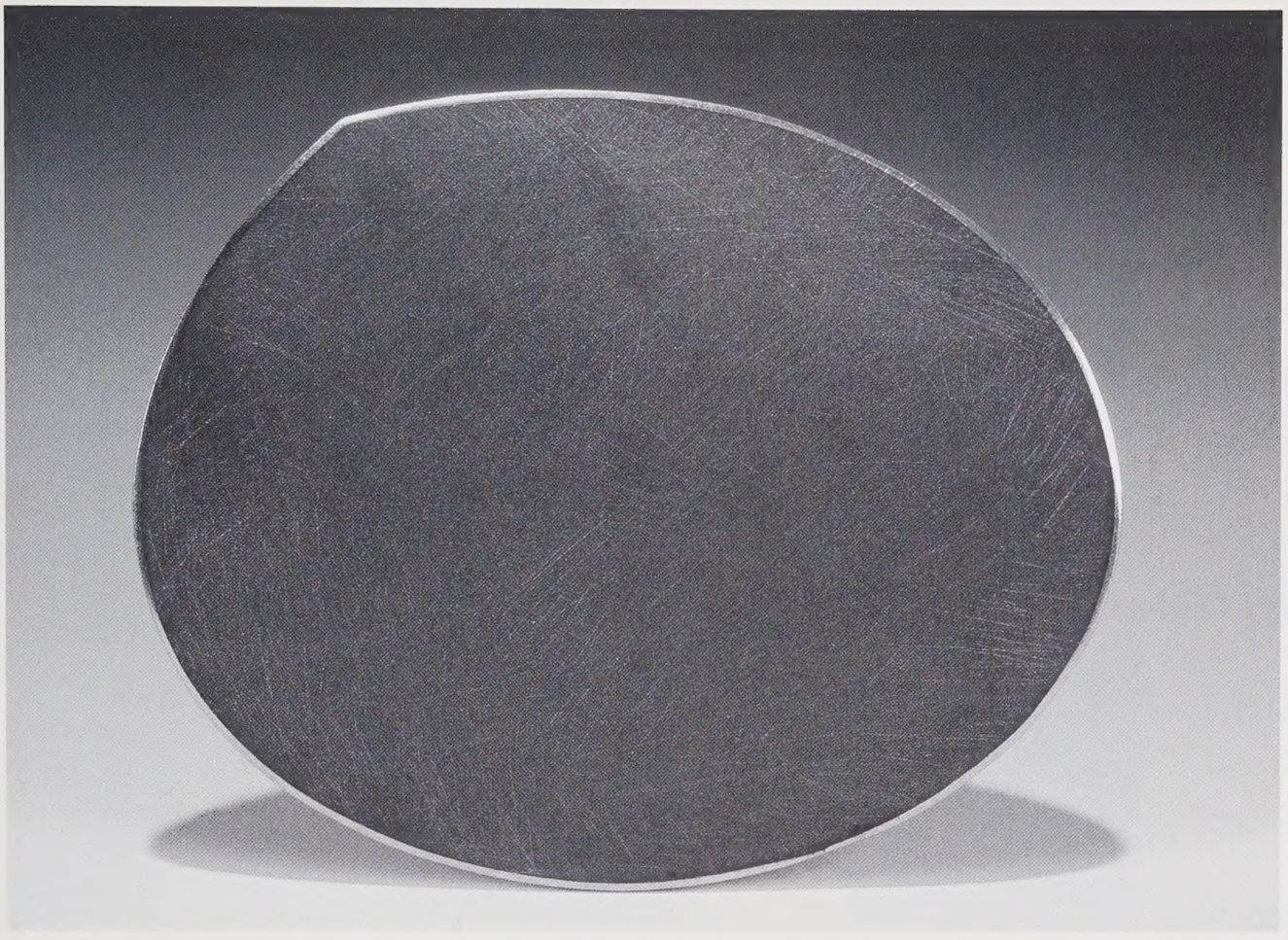
John Iversen

Susan Cummins Gallery
Mill Valley, CA
April 3 – 29, 1995

Reviewed by Bruce Nixon

That John Iversen's work should be regarded as essentially formalist, rooted in the architectonics of European modernist design, seems less a function of Iversen's actual practice than art jewelry's impulse to align itself with accessible art world referents. A great many of Iversen's broaches and bracelets are based upon various configurations of the circle, square and triangle, yes, but his decidedly inexact geometry, which supports a decisive use of materials, represents a kind of *implied* formalism that can be read as a subtle subversion of formalist strategies. Simultaneously, a bracelet comprised of brightly colored formal components, each in its little gold frame, might suggest a painting by Klimt or Ellsworth Kelly – thus enabling the work to negotiate well-established art world codes – or it might offer a quiet critique of the art world's own long-standing habit of borrowing formal ideas from various craft traditions, often without acknowledgment. In this way, Iversen establishes a link to fine art practices without surrendering the dignity, the technical accomplishment or the possibilities for content that exist within the craft traditions in which he also works.

At the same time, Iversen's work is quite visceral: much of its appeal lies in its boldness – its apparent simplicity and unambiguous displays of color. One critic has called these pieces "carved color", and while this aptly describes their particular dramatic effect, it only points in the direction of Iversen's sophisticated relationship with his materials. Color is inseparable from material, of course, and explains something of the artist's own relationship to his medium, but in this case color does not necessarily define it: Iversen's technique, in his brooches and bracelets as well as his egg-shaped pendants, is to apply enamel and then gold plating to a copper armature, itself a technical feat, given the thickness of the enamel, which in turn is reduced to its final form by scraping, filing and otherwise inscribing the materials. Color provides a clear field upon which Iversen exposes his processes as a maker, and a field upon which his process resonates for the viewer.

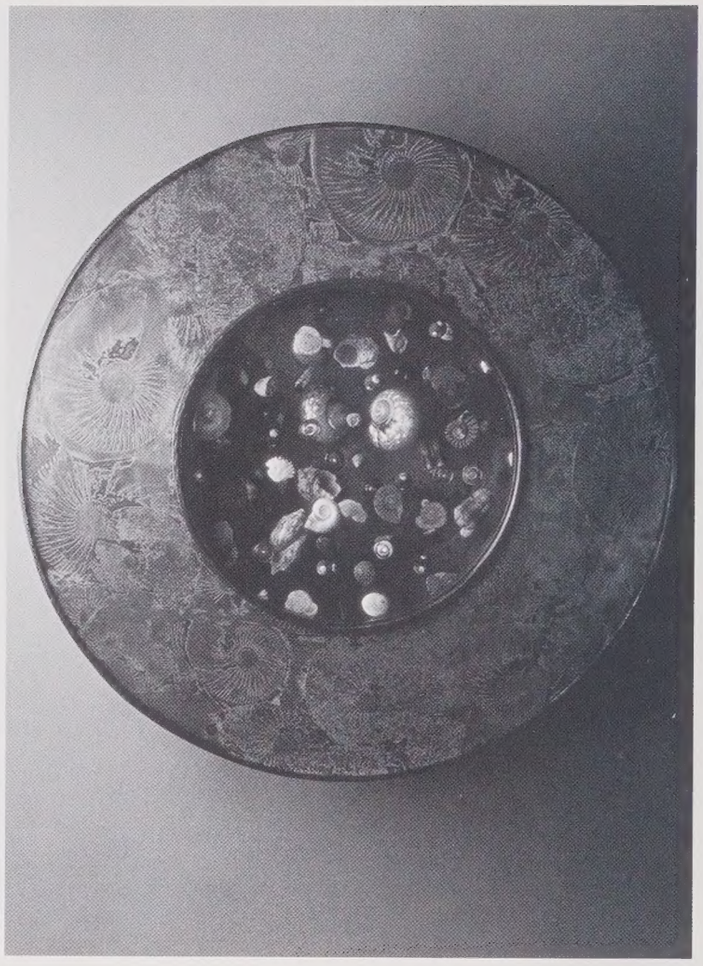


This is exceedingly articulate work. On one hand, it proclaims the virtue of simplicity. Its unobtrusive technical intelligence satisfies the eye. On the other hand, if color is taken as a secondary element that only *appears* to take a primary role, then we must return to Iversen's own referents – the irregularities imposed upon these fundamental forms, or the various devices used to interrupt form, the small wave like blips and indentations, the vivisectional quality of some of the brooches – and so witness the artist in the act of returning formal devices to their origins in the natural world. Iversen has said: "All my jewelry is about the secret which lies hidden in the materials I use. It wants to be discovered." Here, the jewelry relieves form of its aesthetic urgency and, through the artist's own process, reconfigures it as a metaphor for nature in the act of becoming. That the work can be worn, carried out into the world, is only proper. The secret hidden in the materials is the mystery of all the world's objects. Unlike the gem-cutter, however, whose work also is based upon reductive techniques that lead toward a revelation of substance, Iversen does not reshape his material into ideal forms, but simply scrapes at the illusions that surface may present.

Bruce Nixon is editor-in-chief of Artweek, *a journal of contemporary art on the West Coast.*

ABOVE
Big Red, (brooch), 1994
copper, enamel, nickel, silver, 24k plate
1/16 x 3 x 2½"

LEFT
Untitled, (bracelet), 1994-95
copper, enamel, nickel, sterling, 24k plate
6¾ x 2¼ x ¼"



Chris Ramsay: Cycle of Life

Leedy-Voulkos Art Center Gallery
Kansas City, MO
April 21 – June 3, 1995

Reviewed by Debra Peebles

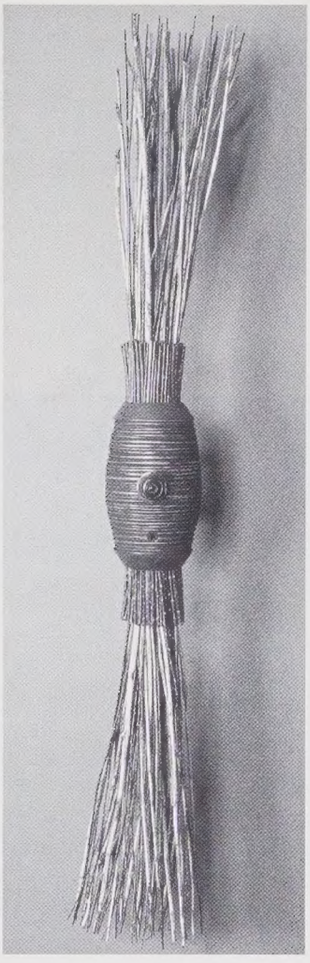
Chris Ramsay is a naturalist and a serious collector and selector of environmental phenomenon. Ramsay skillfully combines objects with wood and metals to build his earth conscious, yet elegant wall pieces.

An Oklahoma artist, the artist blends an obvious environmental consciousness with an equally strong interest in the phenomenon of nature. His work combines metal spheres with found objects and shells seemingly embedded in the solid surface. These objects further explore, in Ramsay's unique voice and skillful craftsmanship, the novelty of the great out-of-doors. In *Cycle of Life,* the artist has compiled a broad grouping of metal, wood, shells, and found contemporary objects, including peep-holes in which to view pictures of various flora and fauna. To some degree his assemblages have an antique quality with patinaed wood, petroglyph-like images, and peep-holes which focus on old photographs and post cards. Even the extremely well done craftsmanship is a reminder of a past era. Yet, the objects as a whole are fresh, expounding on the magical quality nature holds. The least interesting piece, *Mother Earth* is also the artist's earliest effort. Here he covered his copper sphere with gold leaf on top of turquoise blue patina, not yet allowing the materials to expose their own natural allure, as he does throughout his most recent work, yet it is still intriguing in its obvious links to Ramsay's later, more refined pieces.

Throughout most of this work the craftsmanship is precise and might seem tedious, yet everything fits tightly, comfortably and effortlessly into its place, as if a shell somehow formed or fossilized in metal. To encase his peep-hole images Ramsay wraps etched copper plates to form spheres or cones. The etchings are of wild animals, ancient petroglyphic figures, or the swirls and eddies found in the tide pools. These etchings appear to be ancient symbols left by people describing the important relationship they may have once had with the various elements represented. Ramsay embellishes the tops and bottoms of his shapes with various caps, conical shapes, or as in *Romantic Vision Series: Spring Song* or *Mesa* he attaches stripped wood or sticks. These sticks, having been re-fashioned or painted, are added like headdresses, as in *Mesa,* and seem almost feather-like in their coloring and placement. In *Spring Song,* the bunches of bare sticks may have been hewn by beavers giving the whole piece the feeling of a beaver's lodge. Peering into the eye-glass we view an old black and white photograph of a beaver dam among birch trees that line a creek.

Varying these capsules, Ramsay included two carved figures with legs and a head attached to copper cones. The heads, humorously called *Natural Beauties,* are carved out of wood into spiral shell-shaped forms and the pieces have the appearance of fertility dolls.

Next to *Natural Beauties* was *Collection Two,* a remnant voice from Ramsay's earlier depictions of shells encased in metal plates. Here he suspended the shells and found objects inside layers of Plexiglas, holding them in an environment of patinaed copper, perhaps a suggestion of the ocean floor or of layers of both ancient and contemporary forms.



But reading more content into these pieces may be unjust, for like a fine jewel the works hold special qualities that express allure simply by being. These objects go beyond the attempt to define. Each is a treasure capable of standing alone, inviting an exploration of its surfaces, textures, diagrams, color, forms, and the pleasing composition of those elements, increasing curiosity as viewers discover the eyeglasses and buttons with which they can discover even more. Ramsay's journey through his work is surely a romantic trip. Each piece fits effortlessly in place, never leaving an impression that the parts had not been meant to fit together all along. Ramsay's journey is sentimental as well, with each work evoking an atmosphere of times past, something we once knew or saw, or something that was once a part of us. We can still, however, step back and regard each object as a new statement shaped to suit the demands of contemporary sculpture. Sticks of wood, stripped, painted, and re-assembled; found objects sitting with ancient forms are occasions for dialog, as we drift further from nature and are inexorably pulled into Internet. Ramsay's works voice a longing to retain the beauty and magic of the earth before it is forgotten or gets swept away by the tide of modern convenience and the allure and speed of modern technology.

Debra Peebles is a writer who lives in Kansas City, MO.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Collection 2, 1993
copper, patina, plexiglass, wood, found objects
30" diameter x 10" deep

Leopard, 1995
wood, bronze, patina, milk paint, lenses, stereocard
3½ x 1½ x 17"

Sign of Spring, 1995
lathe turned alder wood, copper, patina, sticks, photograph, lens
4½ x 6 x 10"

Jewelry: Rob Peacock
Vessels: Claire Sanford

Side Street Jewelry Gallery
Gloucester, MA
July 15 – August 15, 1995

Reviewed by Sandra Bonazoli

Claire Sanford and Rob Peacock's recent show at the comfortable and intimate Side Street Jewelry Gallery exhibited Peacock's latest work and Sanford's continued meditations on vessel forms.

Sanford's focus seems to be on age and motion, and less on domesticity, containment, and the utilitarian facets of her forms. That the pieces are vessels is merely a departure point, an initial assumption of a shape with which to play.

Sanford is significantly more gestural and figurative than she has been in her previous work. These pieces are animated by the inclusion of elements such as exuberant wing and spiral handles and long, slender necks, leaning forward or arching backward, reaching, gesturing to whomever may be attempting to fill them. At the same time Sanford has made these pieces look aged and somewhat fragile, as if just excavated and miraculously, if tenaciously, intact.

Over half of the pieces are less then ten inches high and are paired or in groups, Through this they gain even more of a sense of character and their animated structure is amplified, they become agile and bending individuals in relation to each other as opposed to isolated objects of study. The smaller works especially, through their relationship with their fellows, exude specific and endearing personalities.

In the past Sanford's concentration has been on vessels which were simple, tall, slender, cylindrical pieces; beautiful in their simplicity and evidence of the artist's intense concentration on exploring a form. This work shows Sanford in a period of transition, attempting more gestural pieces as limbs/handles grow further and more dramatically from their bodies. The simple, direct construction is still there, but there is a bit of awkwardness in some of the proportions of the new limbs that does not quite sit well with the pieces. Judging from her work as a whole, her recent explorations will soon grow into themselves and the works exploring these new elements will enjoy the staying power of her more fully realized explorations with vessels.

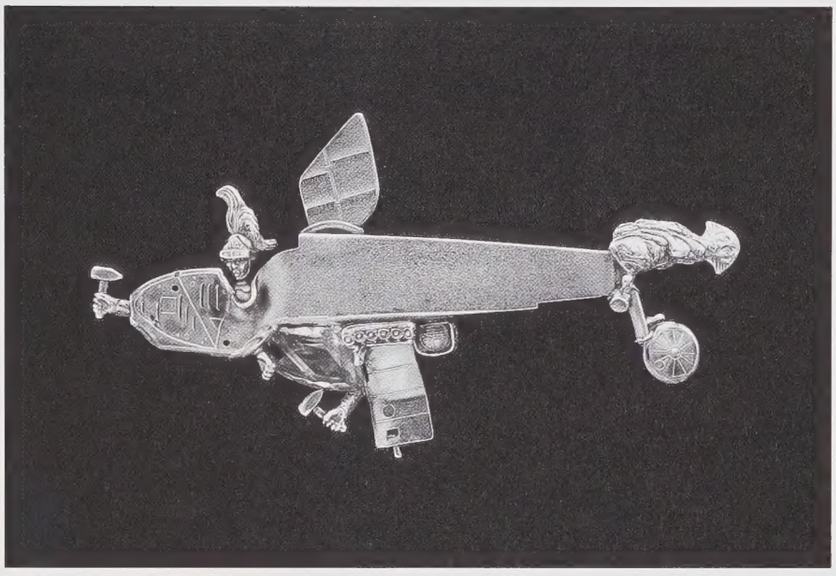
Claire Sanford
Leaning Green Vase and *Green Pitcher with Wing*, 1995
patinated copper, 6¾ x 8"

Rob Peacock's works are pendants and brooches suggestive of the figure. Many are animated and assert an air of intuitive primitivism. All the pieces are constructed from heavily textured silver and found materials: porcelain, coral, slate, fur, brush, sea urchin, and semi precious stones, etcetera. His metals are highly processed, with the hand of the maker and the time it spent, evident. The seemingly disparate elements co-exist as if they were happily shoved together and fit naturally, in improvisational comfort. Part of the success of the relationship between Peacock's elements is that he avoids a hierarchy. In his work a precious stone is no more important then the bristles of a brush.

Why he is working in the forms that he chooses, however, seems less certain. It is obvious that Peacock is attracted to gut responses which lead him in certain directions in his pieces, but after viewing the show I found myself wondering if they were about anything more then what the artist thinks is *neat.* This is their main weakness, though as things go, it is not a devastating one.

Sandra Bonazoli is a metalsmith who lives in Providence, RI. Her work was recently included in the Metalsmith 1995 Exhibition in Print.

 Continued from page 6



J. Fred Woell
Art Metal in Space, (pin), 1992
cast silver, rutilated quartz
2¼ x 4 1/16 x ½"

More importantly, however, we also have the idea of treating an art form as a vehicle for discourse. Such discourse often took the format itself as a subject: painting about painting; dance about dance. Why shouldn't there be jewelry about jewelry, jewlry that explores the nature and limits of jewelry itself? And that's exactly what happened with the so-called *New Jewelry* of the mid-1980s. Jewelers asked: Can jewelry be reduced to an attachment to the body and nothing else? How big can jewelry become before it ceases to be jewelry? The result was the work of Pierre Degen, Johanna Hess-Dahm, Caroline Broadhead, and many others. While such work appeared wildly radical, from an informed point of view it also appeared historically necessary.

It didn't take long before the subject of the jewelry discourse expanded beyond jewelry itself. Fred Woell was one of the first to employ jewelry as a vehicle for social commentary, as in *The American Way* pendant, which quietly condemned the American penchant for violence. Once jewelry became a vehicle, the jeweler had to make choices about priorities. What is more important, strict wearability, itself a flexible criterion; or getting the point across in the clearest possible way? Each individual may make a different choice, but some will sacrifice wearability.

There is a traditional, middle class view of jewelry, and an art-world inflected view. I have to stress that neither view is universally correct. Each has a context, within which it makes perfect sense. My Mom, who wants her jewelry to be a visual accent and an emblem of her social status, would agree 100% with Ettagale Blauer. Forcing her to appreciate a Caroline Broadhead monofilament veil would be a waste of time. And yet, an artist who has been steeped in the discourse of twentieth-century art would not find my Mom's diamond rings very interesting. Such an artist wants to see jewelry that engages in that long and complicated conversation.

The friction comes when the two views struggle for dominance. I think the key – and I have to admit that I find it difficult – is to exercise tolerance. I may not be terribly interested in another point of view, but I don't have to make it submit to my value system, either.

Bruce Metcalf makes jewelry and teaches occasionally in Philadelphia.

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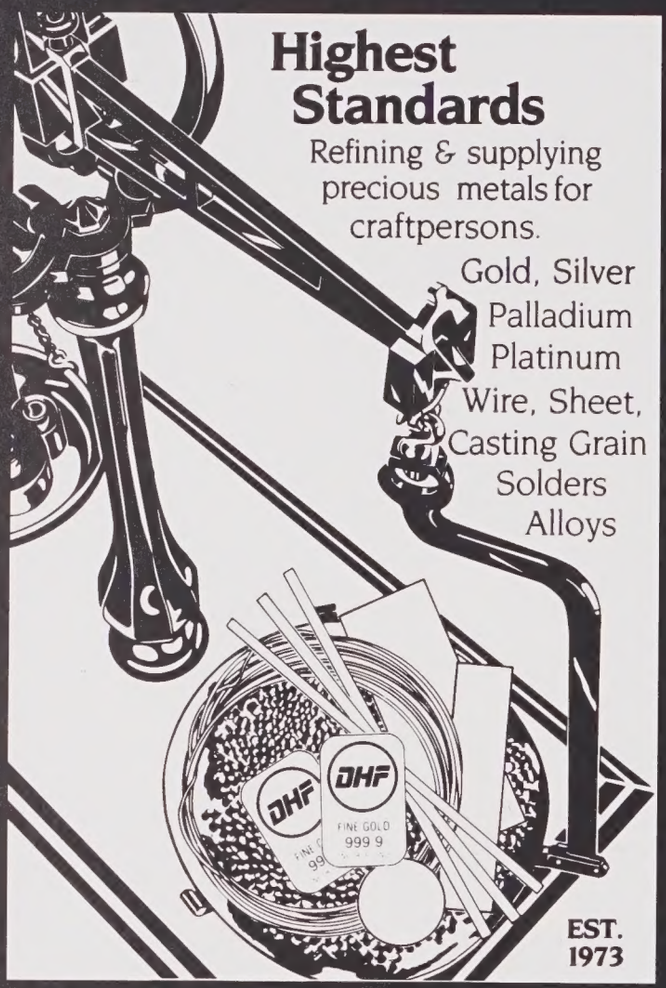

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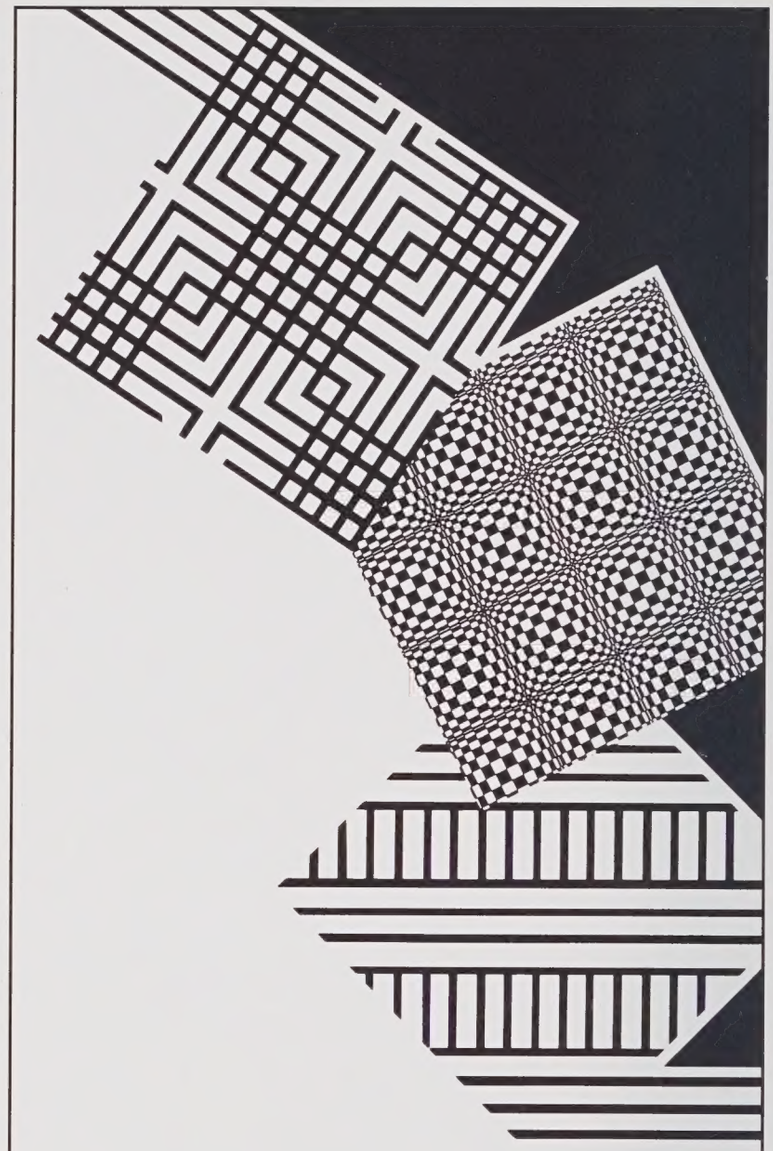

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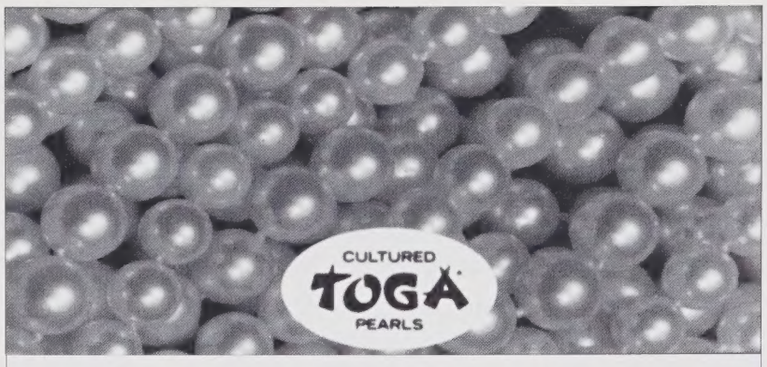

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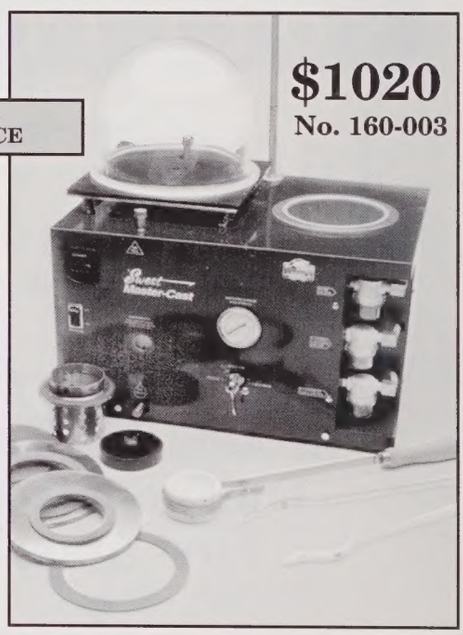

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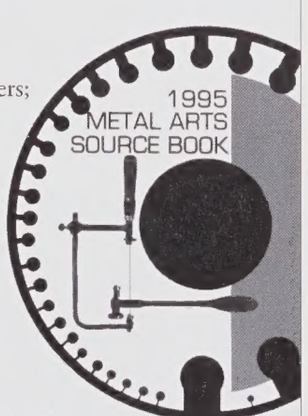

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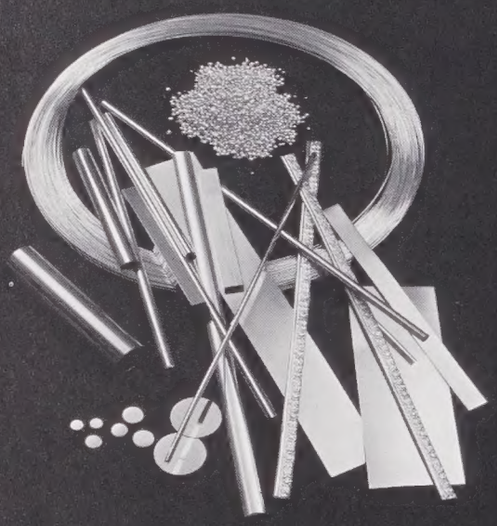

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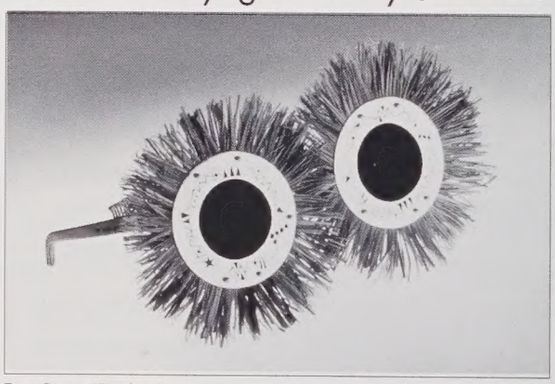

Tami Dean, "Zatchoo"
Bronze, sterling silver, copper, brass 14K gold, mirror, raffia, rubber

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We would like to add slide reproductions of the works of members who have not previously been included in the collection.
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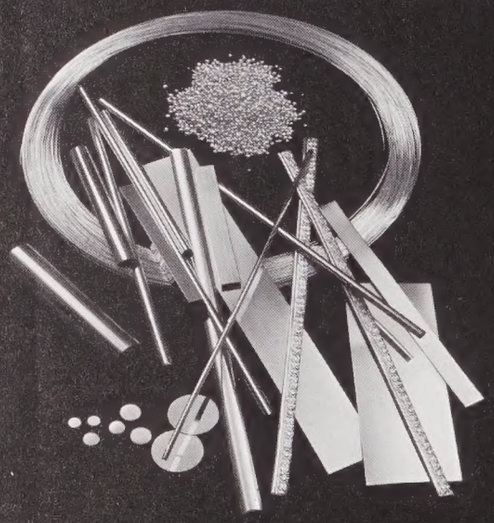

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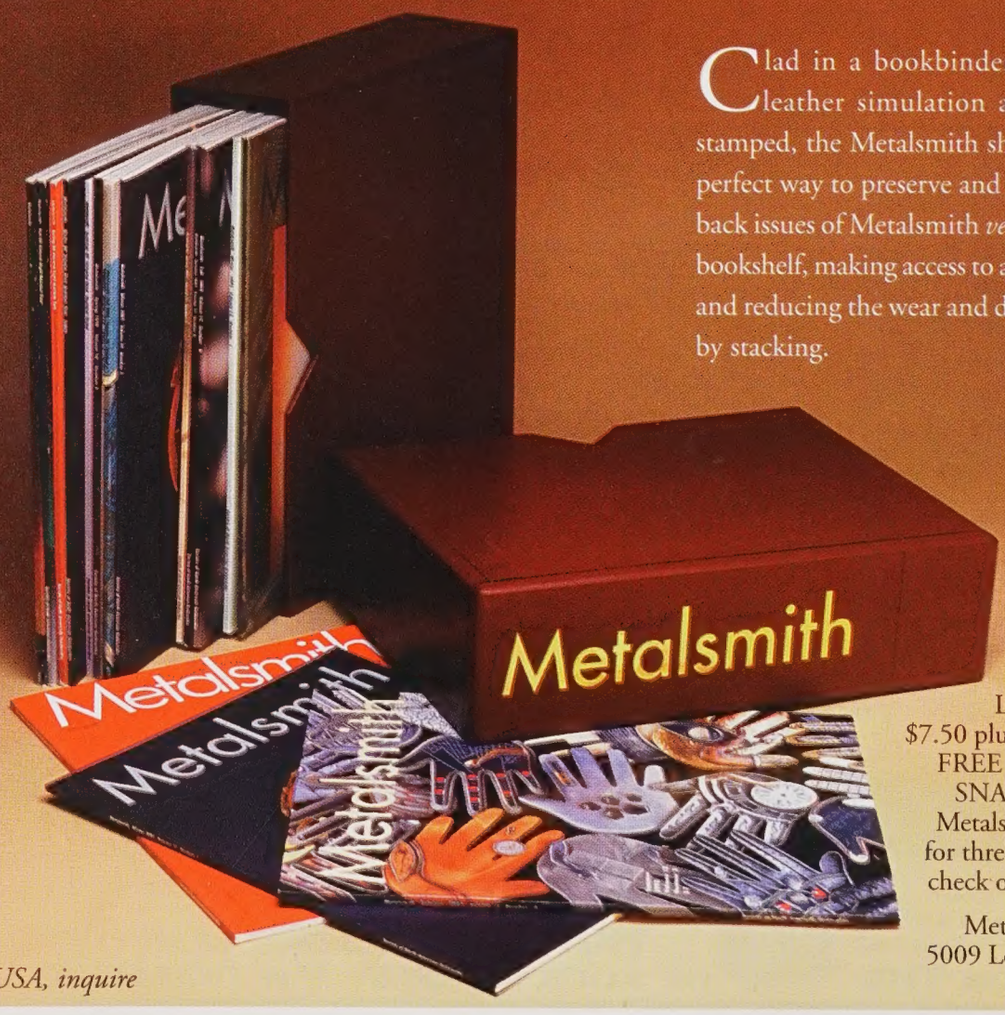

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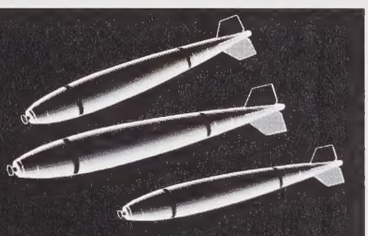

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RESERVATIONS AND ROOM RATES The following rates (taxes not included) will be available from June 9 through June 18, 1996. Single - $109, Double - $109, Triple - $129, Quadruple - $149, Suites will be discounted by 30%. Student rates begin at $95 for a single and $10 for each additional person in a room. For reservations, call 202-328-2900. Reservations must be made before May 19, 1996, and secured with a deposit or credit card. **Conference will be limited to 500 attendees. You need to make your reservations as soon as possible in order to be assured of a room.**

ROOM SHARING - If you need a roommate, contact Karen Schiager, 301-948-1913, and specify number of roommates, non-smoking, etc.

MEAL PLAN - an optional meal plan for $95, including taxes and service charges, is available. This will consist of three breakfasts and two lunches.

AIR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS - The TICKET COUNTER, 6900 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 706, Chevy Chase, MD 20815, is our official travel agent. For information on discount airfare on United Airlines or the appropriate carrier for your city, call THE TICKET COUNTER at 800-247-7651 or Fax : 301-913-0166. All tickets are subject to the rules and regulations of the airlines.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM - Washington at its best in three days jam-packed full of talks, panels, and demonstrations. Invited speakers include: Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Michael Monroe, Roseanne Raab, Oppi Untracht, Betty Cook, Robert Coogan, Steven Fisher, Komelia Okim, Ellen Reiben, Alan Revere, Brian Meek, representatives from the Trademark, Copyright, Small Business and other agencies, and a panel of Washington lawyers. There will be two demonstrations and small group gatherings for students, educators, gallery owner/directors and guild members to get acquainted, compare notes, and discuss mutual concerns.

SPECIAL EVENTS - The conference will begin with a traditional pin swap at the Sheraton. There will be a buffet dinner, and the highlight of the evening will be a special musical review performance by Washington's own, hilarious political satire group, The Capitol Steps. On Saturday, enjoy dinner and dancing at the banquet when the results of the silent auction will be announced. The suppliers will again host a party for all conferees.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS - In DC at the Zenith Gallery, Jewelerswerk; and The Renwick Gallery. In Alexandria VA at the Torpedo Factory and in Rockville MD at Montgomery College, and Zaruba Gallery. Jewelry and metal objects of all kinds may also be seen in all the Smithsonian museums, Dumbarton Oaks, Hillwood House, The Women's Museum, etc.

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STUDENT SLIDE COMPETITION - Open to all students currently enrolled in a college or university taking metals courses. The deadline for submissions is April 1,1996. For information about having your work included in the conference slide show, send to: Professor Jennifer Stenhouse, Metals and Jewelry Department, Savannah College of Art and Design, P.O. Box 3146, Savannah GA 31402-3146. Or call 912-897-7797.

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All subscribers to METALSMITH will receive a conference registration brochure early in 1996. Others may request the brochure by calling Karen Schiager, 301-948-1913. If you have any other questions about the conference, call Eun-Mee Chung, conference chairperson, 301-948-3053.

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS - Shana Kroiz has organized a four-day workshop program, June 8 through June 11, 1995, at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. Presentations will include "Making a Spectacle: The Eyeware Making Workshop" with Deb Stoner and Brian Adams, "Hands Off: Digital Advances in Jewelry Making" with Stanley Lechtzin, and "Creating by Metal Forming" with Betty Helen Longhi. For registration and information contact: Office of Continuing Education, Maryland Institute College of Art, 1300 Mount Royal Avenue, Baltimore MD 21217. Telephone 410-225-2219 or Fax 410-225-2229.

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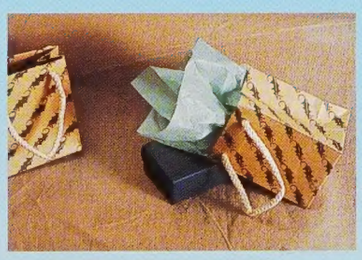

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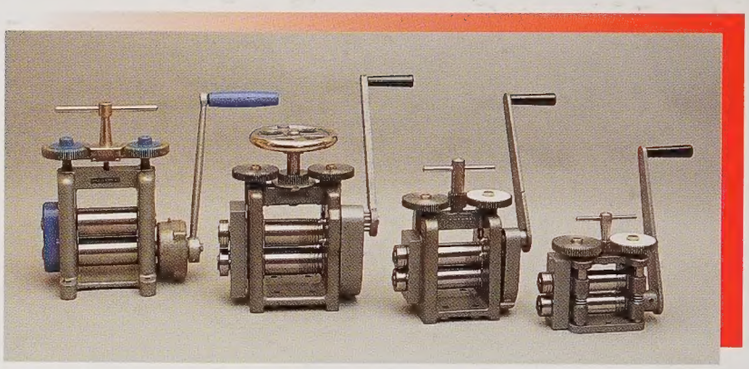

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